



***Focus Centre County –  
A Project of the Centre  
County Community  
Foundation***

**Overview and Results**

**Centre County  
Communities That Care**

**October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Jim Ladlee & Walt Whitmer  
Penn State Cooperative Extension**



# Agenda

- Program Overview
- Focus Group Results
- Service Providers' Survey
- Strategic Planning Retreat – CY&F Results
- Next Steps

# About Focus Centre County

- A unique community visioning initiative encompassing *all of* Centre County.
- Leadership grant awarded to the Centre County Community Foundation to identify an issue that the foundation could address in a meaningful and lasting way.
- An open community process designed to gather input on Knight priority areas from a broad range of perspectives.

# Project Team Members

- CCCF partners
  - Keith Duclos, Special Projects Associate
  - Tom Songer, Program Development Chair
  - Dolores Taricani, CCCF Chair
- Facilitator Team
  - Jim Ladlee, Extension Director, PSU Cooperative Extension/Clinton County
  - Walt Whitmer, Extension Associate, PSU Cooperative Extension
  - Mary Kay Williams, *MindShift* Consulting (CCCF)

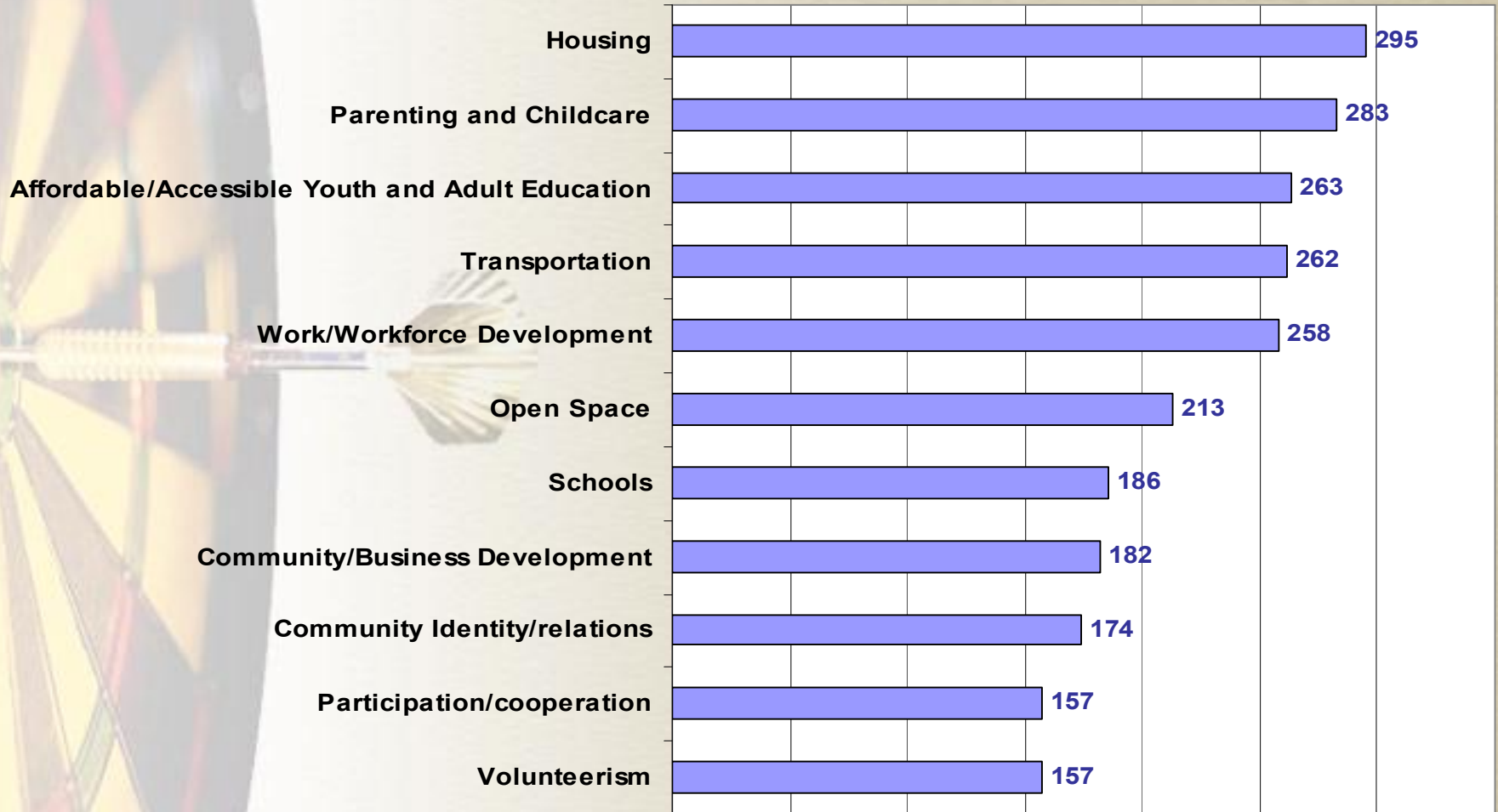
# Project Overview

- **Five Regional Focus Groups (June-July)**
  - State College, Bald Eagle, Philipsburg-Osceola, Bellefonte, Penns Valley
  - Attendance 278
- **Service Providers/Community Leaders Survey (Sept)**
  - Returned Surveys 139 (approx. 50% response rate)
- **Culminating Focus Group (Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>)**
  - Attendance 82
- **Decision Making & Strategic Planning (Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>)**
- **County Data and Report Compilation (Nov. – Dec.)**

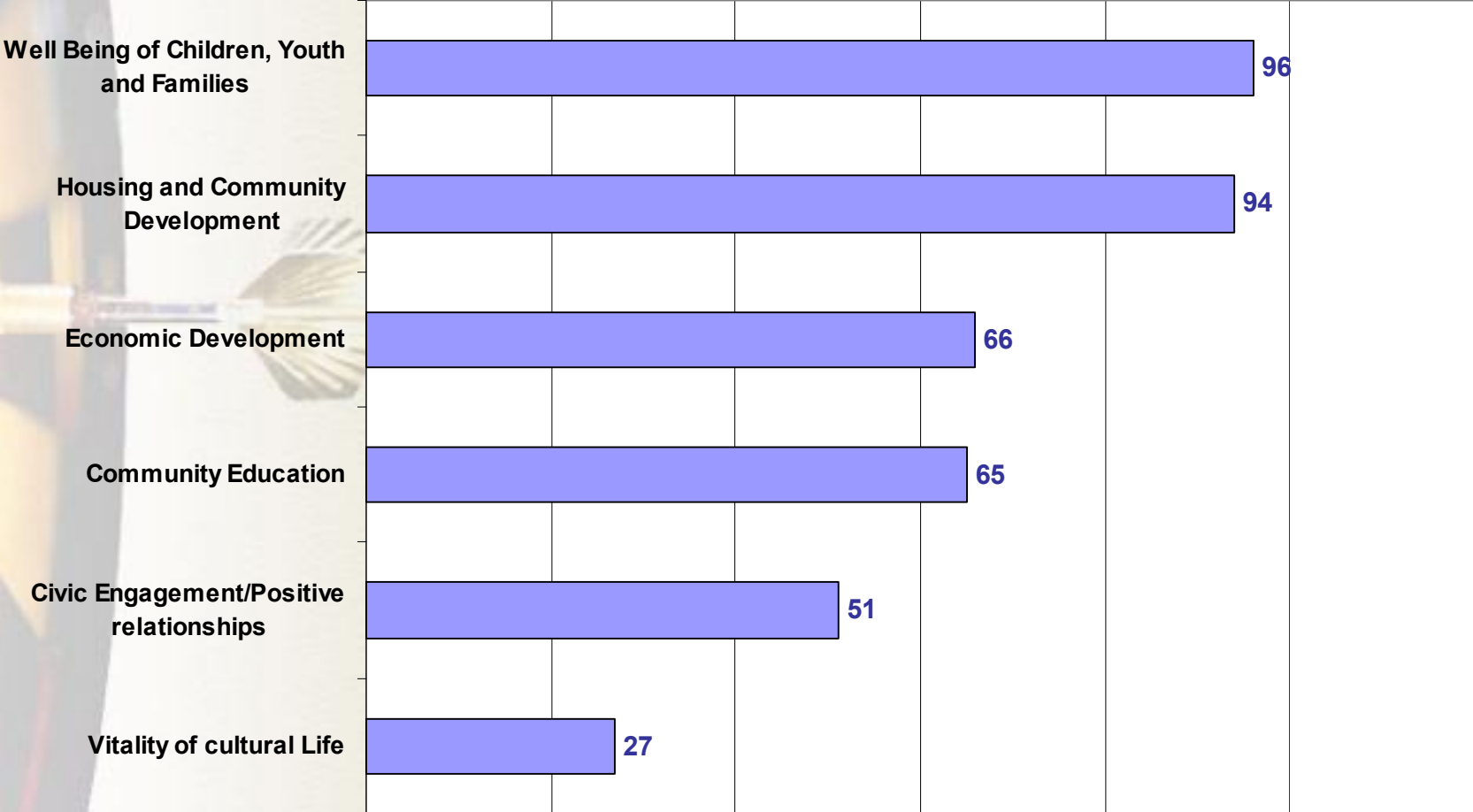
# Culminating Focus Group

- **Eighteen issues resulted from the Regional Focus meetings. They were placed in rank order by participants.**
- **Rank order within the six Knight categories**
  1. Housing and community development
  2. Well-being of children, youth, and families
  3. Community education
  4. The economic development
  5. Civic engagement/positive relationships
  6. Vitality of cultural life

# Top Issue Areas



# Knight Foundation Priority Issues



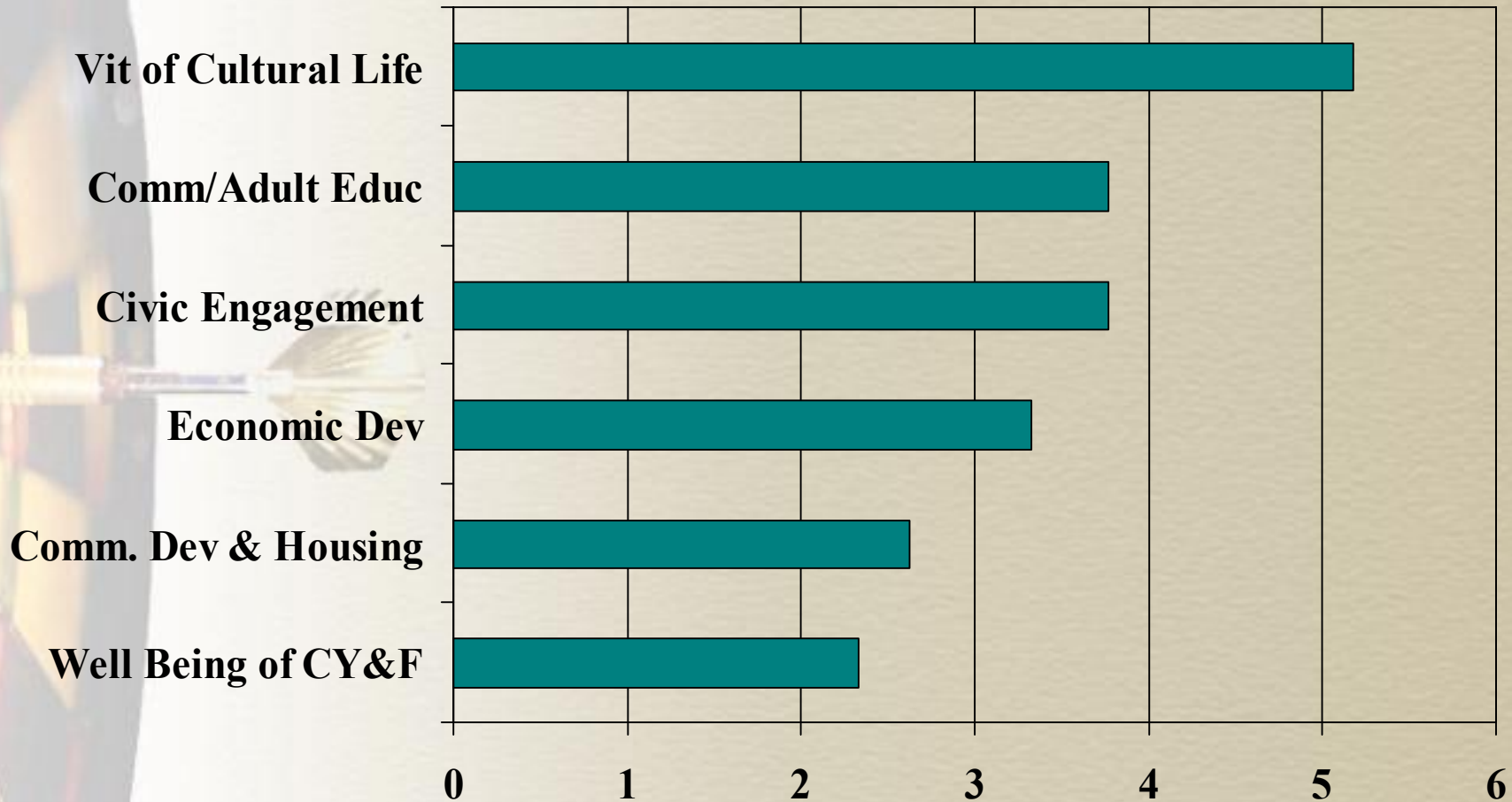
# Survey Results – “High Priorities”

- **Community and Adult Education**
  - Getting parents involved with education
  - More child care for low income residents to obtain an education
- **Well-Being of Children, Youth and Families**
  - Mentoring, volunteering, inc. civic values
  - Housing for low to moderate income families
- **Community Development and Housing**
  - Preserving open space and farms
  - Revitalize existing communities rather than build on open space

# Survey Results – “High Priorities”

- **Economic Development**
  - Including conservation of open space
  - Expanding affordable housing
- **Civic Engagement and Positive Community Relations**
  - Increasing affordable housing
  - Encouraging voting and participation in government
- **Vitality of Cultural Life**
  - Improving transportation to services and events
  - Sharing resources, talents and communications

# Priority Areas



***Note: Lowest Number = Higher Rank***

# What's Working Best in Centre County?

- Good/great schools
- Many educational opportunities
- Lots of civic engagement, volunteerism
- Maintenance of green and open space
- Low crime rates
- Service providers cooperate well
- Inter-governmental cooperation
- Many cultural opportunities
- Good human services
- Penn State resources and presence

# Top Three Challenges

- Affordable and workforce housing - *by far*
- Growth, sprawl, loss of open space
- Public transportation (esp. to rural areas)
- Increasing crime rates
- Parenting skills, poor parenting, limited programs to address these issues

# Likely Changes in Next 5 Years

| Improve                     | Stay About the Same         | Become Worse          |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Recreational opportunities  | Community leadership        | Freedom from crime    |
| Schools                     | Place to raise children     | Housing affordability |
| Housing affordability       | Community spirit            | Environmental quality |
| Historical & Cultural Opps. | Historical & Cultural Opps. | Scenic beauty         |

# **Strategic Planning Retreat – Unmet Needs**

- Parenting
- Bonding
- External support for families
- Sense of community
- Funding
- Health and wellness
- Education/marketing
- Accessibility

# **Strategic Planning Retreat – Ranked Goals**

1. Support parents with parenting skills
2. Funding needs to be made available to support existing programs.
3. Provide support systems/programs to benefit child development and family values.
4. To develop new, and sustain and enhance existing programs that families/individuals can access
5. Make people more aware of services, programs, and activities that are available in Centre County
6. Integrate efforts of schools, parents and supportive governmental and non-profit agencies

# **Strategic Planning Retreat – Ranked Goals *(cont'd)***

7. Assist families with interpersonal difficulties
8. Establish a county-wide effort to identify the three most critical youth related issues and develop a strategy (6 months) that will fund and implement identified services
9. Accessibility to all people regardless of income.
10. Non duplication of resources. Combine programs?
11. Expanded educational opportunities through high schools, PSU, and CPI
12. Increase inter-generational activities.

## **Strategic Planning Retreat – Ranked Goals *(cont'd)***

13. Need to change the paradigm that education begins with kindergarten or first grade; education begins at birth.
14. Assess program's effectiveness
15. Develop partnerships with faculty doing related research
16. Foster volunteer support of existing programs.
17. Form a coalition of impacted parties; design a strategy to prioritize issues and allocation of resources within 6 mos; Implement programs over 3 years.
18. Bench mark with other areas who have similar issues and who are transitioning towards achievement

# What Happens Next.....

- Analyze county data in the context of the two top priority areas.
- Final recommendations made to the CCCF leadership.
- Bring the final issue back to the Knight Community Advisory Committee.
- Final Knight report completed by 11/30/07
- Proposal back to CAC to 12/31/07.
- Final summary report to community at large.



**Questions?**

**Comments?**

**Concerns?**