

FALL 1999



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**Vision:**

*What We Seek to Become*

We seek to increase the capacity of communities to identify their critical issues and opportunities, create consensus-based community change and monitor the results of change efforts.

**Mission:**

*Our Purpose*

We exist to improve quality of life for ALL residents of our community.

**Values:**

*Our Strongly Held Beliefs*

Our customers are the public and then the Forum membership.

The Forum's role is to initiate and facilitate, but not duplicate action by others. We include and respect the diverse individuals and interests of the community in all phases. We build and model leadership that is inclusive, collaborative and vision based; creating what we WANT.



The American Ideal is not that we will all agree with each other or even like each other, every minute of the day. It is rather that we will respect each other's rights, especially the right to be different, and that, at the end of the day, we will understand that we are one people, one country and one community. And that our well-being is inextricably bound up with the well-being of each and every one of our fellow citizens."

Arthur Kropp, People for the American Way

--New York Times, June 21, 1995

**THE FORUM Newsletter Staff**

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# THE FORUM OF GREATER KALAMAZOO

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

by Brent Larson

Things are changing at the Forum of Greater Kalamazoo and we face a number of new challenges. We hear a lot about the stress that change brings to organizations, but it can be positive if we keep looking for opportunity and growth as we go.

The Forum is facing challenges from a few different perspectives as we seek to redefine our membership levels; review and respond to the dynamic needs of our constituencies; review our approaches to engage and improve our community; and improve our long term financial stability.

See the Forum Project Review on page 3 to learn of exciting new things started over the past year as well as ongoing projects. We have a lot going on and many people are involved in these Forum projects in many different ways. Yet we still need to prepare for good programs this fall and next year, and to work closely with our Interim Executive Director, Bill Reed, while starting our search for a permanent director.

Change is also occurring in our greater Kalamazoo community. New leaders and new initiatives are bringing new energy and new ideas. In this time of community transition the Forum has a lot to offer. There is high regard for what the Forum has done, and a great deal of trust in what we are capable of doing.

Stay inspired, and stay with us through this time of change and transition. We need your gifts mentally, physically, and emotionally. I believe that we are just getting warmed up for great things ahead, and look forward to working with you to bring them about. Thank you.

## THE FORUM BIDS PAT ADAMS FAREWELL

by Bill Reed



Pat Adams receives a Certificate of Appreciation from Brent Larson

On August 19, the Forum honored Pat Adams for her work with the Forum since coming on staff in 1991. Her first five years were spent as Director of the River Partners Project and the last three years as Executive Director of the Forum. With much of the original vision for the river fulfilled or in progress, Pat felt she had done what she set out to for the river. As Executive Director, she had successfully widened the scope of Forum initiatives and came to feel it was time for a change.

Heeding a growing desire to focus her work on children, families and education, she found it impossible to resist an ad seeking a new Director for the Curious Kids Museum in St. Joseph, Michigan. Pat's earlier career experience with education in traditional and nontraditional settings plus her Forum community building and outreach skills were just what they were looking for. Anyone who knows Pat and her love for water will also sense the strong pull of Lake Michigan in her decision.

(Continued on page 4)

## Moving Forward With Bill Reed

By Margaret von Stienen

More than 15 years of volunteering for community organizations that aid citizens in identifying community concerns and taking constructive action to resolve issues has provided a broad base of experience for Bill Reed, Interim Executive Director of *The Forum for Greater Kalamazoo*.

Reed was appointed to the position in August when Patricia Adams left to serve as Executive Director of the Curious Kids Museum in St. Joseph, Mich. Reed has been an active Forum member and volunteer since 1990 and has served as a board member since 1996. The executive board selected Reed for the position because of his knowledge of the Forum and his extensive experience with community-based leadership and change.

Participating in a National Issues Forum hosted by the Forum in 1990 was the drawing card for Reed's involvement with the Forum, which then spurred him to train as a NIF facilitator.

"I was really intrigued by this idea of using facilitated dialogue to discuss difficult issues," said Reed, a local residential Realtor for the last 23 years. "We learned to study an issue, look at it from many sides, and create consensus among the group."

Reed had already been active rallying local citizens around the issue of recycling. He co-founded Kalamazoo County Citizens for Recycling in 1989 and served as chair until 1993. The group quickly grew to more than 700 people who supported the Kalamazoo County recycling pilot program and then helped establish the expanded programs we use today.

"For me, the work of addressing community issues presented challenges which were fun and satisfying," he said. "I then began to look for other ways to make a difference. One was to get more

active in the Forum, but I also helped found the Kalamazoo Environmental Council and an Environmental Committee of the Greater Kalamazoo Association of Realtors. I realized that my heart was really in supporting community improvement efforts. I was inspired to find there was no shortage of people who care in our community, but there did seem to be a shortage of effective ways for them to act on their cares. To me, a key challenge of leadership is to create opportunities for people of all ages and circumstances to get a personal experience of making a difference for others."



**Pat Adams with Clarice Cook and Bill Reed at Pat's farewell celebration.**

Reed said the Forum has a solid track record for identifying community concerns and turning them into constructive action – a rich heritage he hopes to advance as Interim Executive Director.

"I want to use this time to reorganize and streamline some of the Forum's basic office and financial systems to simplify the workload for staff," he said. "It is clear we are going to have to launch a serious membership and donor drive with a very intentional effort to increase community involvement and financial support for the Forum. Over the 1990s, a great deal of the Forum's efforts revolved around the Kalamazoo River and railway, where we have made some substantial accomplishments. We are now at a time where those things are up and running, and much of that work is being done by other entities in the community. The Forum is at a challenging time of redefining and refocusing its mission."

Reed recently concluded a three-year appointment as program director of CLIMB – Community Leadership Initiative-Michigan's Best!, a state-wide MSU Extension project co-funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. He said the project convened a "very diverse" group of individuals from all over the state in a kind of learning laboratory for new approaches to help communities of all types realize greater potential.

"In that role, I acted as a coach, a facilitator, and helped bring people and resources together across the state," he said. "I loved being able to serve and support others in their community improvement efforts. That job experience prompted me to leap when the opportunity arose to play a similar role locally with the Forum."

Working as an residential Realtor in a home-based office has allowed Reed to take an active role, along with his wife of 22 years, Leslie, in raising his two children, Lindsay, 15, and Alyssa, 12, – a role he says contributes to his consensus-building skills. In addition to what he calls as a hobby volunteering 10 plus hours a week, Reed is an avid race walker who walks 20-30 miles weekly and has won first place age-group honors at the national level.

Reed has also served as President of the Greater Kalamazoo Association of Realtors, Action Team Chair for Healthy Futures, and is the current chair of Leadership Kalamazoo.

"I always seek to contribute in ways which make the groups I am part of, and the community at large, a better place for everyone," Reed said.

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\*We wish to extend an extra thanks to those who gave extra donations.

We also wish to thank the many volunteers who gave valuable time to the community.

Any errors or omissions are unintentional. Please call 616-337-7002 if there are any corrections.



**THE FUTURE OF THE FORUM**  
**by Clarice Cook**  
**Forum Office Manager**

The Board of The Forum of Greater Kalamazoo, the former Forum for Kalamazoo County, founded in 1983 by Dr. Wen Chao Chen, of Kalamazoo College is creating a new chapter in its history. The sustainability of the Forum is being determined by the current Forum Board of Directors in the course of approximately six months.

For me the future of the Forum means more than job security, it is of the utmost importance and will matter for generations to follow. The progress of the greater Kalamazoo area will be impacted by the decisions and projects that come out of the ideas, needs and desires of the people. How well the needs of the people are met will be determined by its leadership, by how well people are informed, and whether or not they have ways to express ideas and determine their goals.

Every successful community needs a strong foundation to build on. Without the Forum, I believe progress would be much slower and important projects would still be on the back burner.



I have been inspired by the intelligence, common sense and the commitment of people in Forum projects for the Trailways, Relationship Centered Care, Coalition for Urban Redevelopment, Improving the Environment, Economic Task Force, etc. The sharing of experience and learning that can only be done in a setting where citizens, business leaders and government leaders can sit down together must be akin to the town meeting gatherings that built our country. The entire process was and is the very essence of democracy. I envision that the concept of the Forum will be sought after and used as a model for all communities in America.

Over the years, the country evolved into a less family and community based society, and authority and decision making became more bureaucratic. A consensus has developed that shouting and negative action is necessary to be heard by decision makers. When the masses have no input into the processes of a community, the system becomes unbalanced. The structure of the Forum has brought and will continue to give a rational and positive voice to all people from all walks of life: student; clergy; farmer; lawyer; housewife; health, legal, education and business professional; skilled trades and retiree...we are the Forum of Greater Kalamazoo.

**(Continued from Page 3 - Project Updates)**  
**Davis Creek Watershed Project**

We are in a very busy final year for this unique, 3-year, grant funded project to improve and protect Davis Creek. This year's focus has been the installation of urban "Best Management Practices". BMP is the term used under the federal Clean Water Act to describe techniques which best protect water quality.

Since each watershed and site within it is unique, BMP's must be selected for the water quality concerns at each identified problem site. Urban BMP's are especially difficult to implement since past neglect, land use, and an extensive urban storm sewer system often leave few economical choices for meaningful water quality improvements.

This has been a challenge for the diverse public and private partnership brought together jointly by the Forum and the Kalamazoo Conservation District through the Davis Creek Project. This also explains why public awareness, education and citizen stewardship has been an ongoing project focus.

In this last year of the project nearly one dozen BMP projects designed to protect and improve Davis Creek will be implemented.

*(Continued from Page 1 - Pat Adams)*

Pat leaves with a sense of great pride in the work done by river partners. "The community created something out of nothing by using the visioning process and the energy and desires of the community. Public perception of the river shifted from very negative to quite positive and it became a focal point for trail way efforts, cleanup, and now redevelopment. We united people from communities all along the river and then businesses and schools in something we can all be proud of." Pat expressed equal satisfaction in her work with Vicksburg Community Schools to develop the K-5 Water Partners curriculum for their Outdoor Education Center.

Introducing new ideas to the community has also been rewarding. The series of workshops on Emotional Intelligence, last year's Economic Vitality series, and now the Relationship-Centered Care initiative are important highlights for her.

"The people along the way that I've come to know and work with are some of the best people you will find...people who I am proud to call friends."

**We offer heartfelt thanks to Pat Adams for her many years of dedicated service to the Forum and to the greater Kalamazoo region and wish her the very best in her new endeavors.**



**SUPPORT THE FORUM FINANCIALLY**

**Donations and memberships are our primary means of support.**

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**We have a genuine need for additional support at this time.**

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