



Understanding Your Community

Part Four: Interviewing Community Leaders

Working with Jesus

iFOLLOW

The iFollow Discipleship Series

About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

Curriculum Development: The iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition curriculum development was lead by the **Center for Creative Ministry**. **General Editor:** Monte Sahlin; **Assistant Editor:** Debbonnaire Kovacs; **Directional Advisory:** Brad Forbes, Carole Kilcher, Ceri Myers, Cesar Gonzalez, Clayton Kinney, Curtis Rittenour, Dave Osborne, Dave VanDenburgh, Gerry Chudleigh, Jane Thayer, Jerry Thomas, John Appel, Jose Rojas, Kim Johnson, Nicole Chao, Paul Richardson, Rich DuBose, Shasta Nelson, William Sutton; **Pastoral Advisory:** Claudio Consuegra, Collette Pekar, Dave Hutman, Don Driver, Fredrick Russell, Jerry Nelson, Jesse Wilson, Leslie Bumgardner, Loren Fenton, Rebecca Brillhart; **Unit Authors:** Alberto Valenzuela, Althea Pineda, Corienne Hay, Debbonnaire Kovacs, Ed Dickerson, Gianluca Bruno, Gil Bahnsen, Greg Nelson, Jack Calkins, James Whibberding, Karen Collum, Monte Sahlin, Norma Sahlin, Pam Splawinski, Patty Ntihuka, Reinder Bruinsma, Ryan Bell; **Additional contribution** by Maria Ovando-Gibson; **Additional editing:** Dave Gemmell, Meredith Carter; **Graphic Design:** Mind Over Media; **Layout:** Paul D. Young; **Web Development:** Narrow Gate Media.

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Understanding Your Community

Part Four: Interviewing Community Leaders

This is the fourth in a series of six units designed to provide basic training in community assessment.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the community power structure
2. Understand the role of influential individuals in the community
3. Understand how attitudes are shaped in the community
4. Learn how to interview community leaders in order to gather information about the needs and attitudes in the community

Content Outline

1. How a community is influenced
2. The influence map
3. How to find influential leaders in the community
4. Conducting interviews with civic leaders
5. Civic clubs as an avenue for connecting with the community

Background Material for the Presenter

In every group there are certain individuals who influence the thinking of many others. In our congregation it may be people who have been members for a long time and know the history of the church. Or, it may be individuals who are respected because of their occupation or education, or their contact with a significant number of other members.

The same thing is true in our community. There are “influentials” or “thought leaders” who have a great deal of impact on the attitudes and opinions of local residents. These include elected officials and those who work in the news media. Beyond those few are the relatively larger



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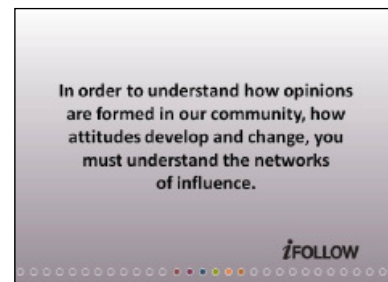
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numbers of individuals who each influence a much smaller circle: The barber or hair-dresser who chats with a number of customers each day; the foreman or office manager who supervises a number of employees; the bank vice president who has lunch with two or three local business owners one day and attends a civic club the next; the public school principal who has coffee with her teachers every morning and talks to parents several times a day, as well as meeting with a weekly PTA group. These individuals, particularly those who are long-time community residents, are all “influentials” and in a broader sense community leaders.

In order to understand how opinions are formed in our community, how attitudes develop and change, you must understand the networks of influence. Americans pride themselves in being individuals who “think for themselves.” In fact, the power of individualistic values is at an all-time high. Nonetheless, no one can form an opinion about something he is completely unaware of. In order to believe that chocolate ice cream is better than vanilla, a person has to have at least heard about ice cream! Where do people hear about things?



Of course, most people get some of their information—in some cases, most of it—from television, radio, newspapers, magazines and books. But, those sources are largely impersonal, distant and distrusted by the average American today. “How do I know it is not a scam?” a man asked me once when I handed him a booklet published by the Temperance Department showing autopsy photos of lungs diseased by tobacco. Of course, evidence has come out more recently that the tobacco companies have lied to the public all these years. Company executives have admitted in court that they knew smoking was related to cancer, but suppressed the evidence and paid for researchers to try to prove otherwise.

How can the average person know whom to believe? Both sides have evidence, documentation and authorities with credentials. In the constant war of ideas, the average person in our community makes up his or her mind largely on the basis of people they know personally and respect. If the doctor you have gone to for years, particularly the one that delivered your baby or got you up and back to work in a short time after you broke your leg, says, “Stop smoking. It will kill you,” then that’s it! As the medical profession in America has developed a strong consensus that smoking is unhealthy, that same attitude has slowly moved out through the entire general public. Even nine of ten smokers today readily agree that it is not good for them!

When a person is new in town and needs to buy tires for his car, what does he do? He asks a coworker or neighbor, “Where’s a good place to get tires?” When a mother moves to town and needs to find babysitters, what does she do? She asks a friend at church or another mother she’s met at the supermarket, “Do you know a good babysitter?” That is the process of influence. That is how opinion is shaped. The individuals who are listened

to most carefully are “thought leaders,” people who have earned respect because of their position, their tenure in the community, and their personality.

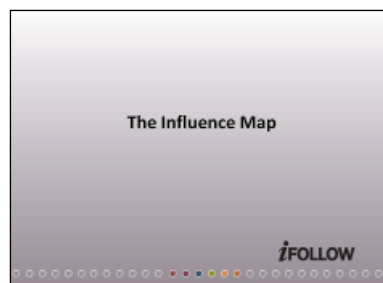
No matter what segment or segments of our community you have decided to focus on, influentials are the key to understanding local attitudes. Every ethnic, occupational, and social group has its thought leaders. Among blue collar workers the influentials are often work supervisors, labor union leaders, and team captains in volunteer sports leagues and recreation groups. Among white collar workers the influentials will be their more senior and better trained coworkers, health care and education professionals that come into contact with their family, and neighbors who are active in block clubs or local politics. Among small business owners the influentials are bankers, real estate brokers, and civic club officers. Among professionals the local thought leaders will be other professionals whom they respect, elected officials and experts on the topic at hand.

Of course, friends are always influential. The handful of individuals a person feels closest to will have tremendous influence on that person’s attitudes on many topics. Among the less educated, there may be a strong sense of the limits of the knowledge and experience of one’s circle, but among those who have gone to college, respected friends—those seen as knowledgeable individuals on a particular topic or a variety of subjects—have a strong influence on opinions about almost any question. If a middle-class American goes to a doctor and gets unexpected news, almost immediately someone in their circle of friends will say, “Get another opinion.” And they often do it. Friends are particularly influential when it comes to the most personal of questions, including whether or not to join a church, accept a new faith or make a religious change.

The Influence Map

In our community there are at least two layers of influential people. There are “segment influentials” who are respected as informal thought leaders within particular segments of the community, and there are “major influentials” that constitute a strata above the segmentation. These major influentials are thought leaders across several segments or, in some cases, across all segments of the community.

There is also a network of relationships among the two or more layers of influentials in our community. The major influentials are able to maintain their positions of respect across various segments of the community because of their personal relationships with segment influentials. For example, an Adventist pastor came to know a city councilman in a town in California and spent nearly two years working with him on a community project. The pastor learned that he spent most evenings sitting at a table in the back of a certain restaurant, and that if the pastor sat with him, several dozen individuals would



stop by during the course of the evening to chat with this man for a while, ask questions and pass on information. He would introduce the pastor to these people and a pattern emerged. Several were low-level labor union leaders—the secretary of the nurses union local at the county hospital, a couple of “shop stewards” in nearby factories, and the head of the police officers association—while others were connected to the small businesses in town and ethnic communities; the owner of a hardware store, a member of the board at the Chamber of Commerce, the chairman of the Mayor’s Commission on Downtown Revitalization, and the president of La Raza, a Mexican-American citizens group.

When the Adventist pastor observed this man make speeches—both formal and informal—at city council and in various committees, the pastor heard him use quotes and information that had been passed on to him in the evenings prior by friends sitting at his table in the restaurant. When the pastor sat with him in the restaurant, the pastor heard him explain to the people who stopped by the developments in the council and committees regarding the topics of interest to them. This influential civic leader would quote to them the statements of the most powerful individuals at City Hall and the views of opponents, and ask them their views on various options for deal-making. Most of the items under discussion were not “politics” in the formal sense, but things like after-school music programs at the high schools and whether cigarette vending machines should be installed in nursing homes. The opening of new stores and restaurants were often discussed. In America anyone is free to start a business if they have the money or can borrow it, but often the owners of new businesses want zoning changes or better sewer hookups or an upgraded transformer installed on the roof and these involve safety regulations or the rights of neighbors. Much of what this elected official talked about had nothing to do directly with politics; it was about the betterment of his community.

Even among religious leaders in our community this same kind of “power networking” exists. There may be a formal Council of Churches which the mainline Protestant churches have organized with formal membership and financial support from those congregations who join. It is more likely that there is only a Ministerial Association, a professional group to which all of the pastors in town are invited. Sometimes it is even less formal. In one small town where I served as a pastor, there was only an informal planning committee for the annual, interfaith Thanksgiving service that met at least once in the spring each year and then monthly from September through November. In each of these situations, leaders are voted by the group and that vote is based on how long a person has been in the community and the respect of their peers. The members of the group listen carefully to one another, and those who have been around longer, know more of the local history and are more knowledgeable about the particular issue have influence on the opinions of the others.

How to Identify the “Influentials” in the Community

To understand our community it is essential that you identify the thought leaders, get

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to know them and dialog with them. It will take a little work to simply identify who the influentials are. You will not find a section of the Yellow Pages labeled “Thought Leaders.” There are at least three necessary steps in getting a list of the “influentials” in our community.

1. Go the public library and look for the names of the elected officials, owners or executives of major businesses, and the leaders of various institutions and community organizations. Often the Chamber of Commerce has a list of the largest businesses and civic organizations. You may find a copy of these documents in the “vertical file” at the library or get an up-date-date copy from the Chamber of Commerce office, possibly at modest cost. The United Way will often publish a directory of community service organizations, and there will be official reference books listing the administrators of the school system, local hospitals, colleges and universities. Yearbooks from the newspaper and broadcast industries will provide you with the names of the owners and managers of local news media. City officials—police chief, city manager, etc.—will be listed in official documents.

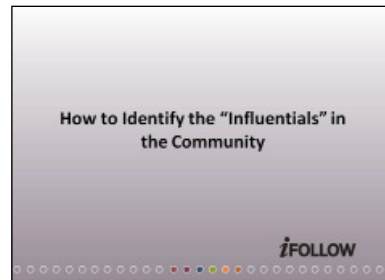
2. Once you have put together a list, share it with a few of the most knowledgeable church members and ask them to indicate who on the list seems to them to be most influential. And, who on the list has ever had any contact with the church? Keep a careful tally of the responses you get. It will give you a clear picture of how the local church is connected to community networks after completing the next step.

3. Go to two or three individuals that you know in the community—people whom you think are long-term residents, know something about community affairs and may be segment influentials—and ask them who on your list are the most influential thought leaders in the community and why. Listen carefully to their comments and stories. It will tell you a lot about what is going on in the community; who is powerful and how power is used. The more people you can talk to at this stage, the better. You may want to keep sharing the list and asking questions for some time.

Interview Community Leaders

Eventually we must interview some of the thought leaders to really understand the community. This is one of the most important community research tools available. It serves not only to get very helpful information about the needs, culture and dynamics of our community, but it also brings our church to the attention of community leaders.

The procedure for interviewing community leaders is simple and straight-forward. It is a project that a small team



can complete in a few weeks or months. It is labor intensive, but costs nothing more than a pen, small notebook and eventually a flip chart and marker.

1. Ask a few church members or other individuals to help you. Unless you are in a position to devote a significant amount of time each week, doing this by yourself, it will take much too long. It is also true that some of the learnings from this exercise come because a group of interested volunteers are involved in a process of “action research.” It is highly recommended that if you have a steering committee seeking to start a new ministry, they all take part in this process. College or university students can be used as research assistants. Often there are students at Adventist colleges who need this kind of experience in their training and would be delighted to spend a spring break or summer vacation employed in this type of project.

2. Give the interviewers a list of community leaders and decide who will take each part of the list. A detailed list of the best thought leaders to interview in any community is included in Handout 2. It also includes more specific questions to ask each community leader based on their particular area of specialization. There are six major categories in this list, and it is important to spread the interviews as equally as possible among these six categories in order to get a balanced view of the community. In fact, you can use these six segments as a device to decide how many interviews to do. At a bare minimum, you need to interview six community leaders, one from each section. Or, you could decide to interview a dozen community leaders, two from each section. Or eighteen community leaders, three from each section, and so on. If you were to interview all 48 of the community leaders on the list, you would have a top-line source of information and visibility in the community.

3. Set a time interval during which interviews are to be completed and then meet again to de-brief the interviews. For example, if you decide that each person will do two interviews, then you might want to suggest, Let’s get our first interviews done in the next two weeks and then meet to see what we’ve learned. Another meeting could then be held when the second round of interviews is done after four weeks.

4. Review the interview questions with your team. The basic questions are displayed in the box on this page. More specialized questions are included with each community leader on the list in the appendix following this chapter. Make sure that the interviewers know to carry a notebook and take notes as they interview each leader. The interviewer should ask for permission to take notes at the beginning of the interview, after explaining that “I am not a journalist and we will not publish any identified quotes.” The purpose of the interview is a community needs assessment, and all comments will be anonymous in the report to the congregation or board. A tape recorder is not recommended because it makes some leaders nervous and the work of transcribing the tapes almost never gets done.

5. In most cases, it is best for the interviewer to phone first and get an appointment.

Some of the lower-ranking types of leaders on the recommended list may not actually require appointments. You may be able to just walk in and get a chance to talk with them. This is especially true in smaller towns. A few community leaders may not want to give an appointment for an interview, and you may have to go do their office and “catch” them after being refused on the phone. At times you will find resistance because they have never heard of the Adventist Church or they do not think you are important enough for them to use their valuable time with you. Always have a back-up plan in case it becomes impossible to get an appointment with a key leader. One fall-back plan is to ask if you can interview an assistant or another staff member in their office. Another fall-back plan is to simply use the list in each section of the appendix to this chapter and phone others in the same section until you get one or more of them to agree to an interview.

What to Say to Set up Interviews

These civic leaders are busy people with many demands on their time. It is unrealistic to expect to talk with them without first setting up an appointment. Handout 3 provides a suggested script for a phone call to set up an appointment for an interview. In many cases, you will talk with the office assistant of the individual you want to interview.

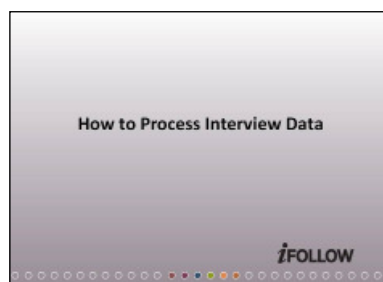
Included is an activity designed to give the participants in your training session practice in making this phone call in order to get a feel for how easy it is and gain confidence in implementing the plan.



How to Process Interview Data

Once all of the interviews have been completed, the next step is to extract the useful information and learnings from the notes taken by the interviewers. This is best done in a group meeting where the interview team “de-briefs” their interviews with their notes in hand.

1. Make a master list of needs identified in the community. Note those that were mentioned in more than one interview. Make sub-lists of specific suggestions under each need listed. This information will begin to make clear to you what needs exist in your community which you might try to meet to consider in your strategic planning.



2. Make a master list of the influentials mentioned. List the names and keep a count of how many times each name was mentioned. A picture of the power structure in your community will begin to emerge. Consider creating a chart that shows who mentioned

whom. This networking chart would begin to reveal to you the important relationships and alliances in the community. Consider seeking additional interviews with a few of the individuals mentioned the most often.

3. Make a master list of the impressions of the Adventist Church shared in the interviews. Be careful how you “hear” what has been said. Few community leaders will want to alienate anyone, so they won’t come right out and say, “You don’t do anything valuable.” Instead, they will say general things that apply to all churches, or they may say, “I really don’t know much about your church.” Or, as they talk more, it may become obvious that they are confused about who and what the Adventist Church really is. The only meaningful positive response is something very specific. For example, “Last year your Pathfinder Club cleaned up the park out on Route 30.”

Once you have completed these lists, ask your team the more basic question: What have we learned from this exercise? What does this information mean? What should we do about it? Based on this, a list of recommendations can be developed to take to the board or other decision-making group. Be sure to capture the raw lists mentioned above and include them in the report with the recommendations. These lists provide the evidence that will support the recommendations.

The dialog that ensues in a congregation when this kind of community interviewing project is completed is extremely valuable. People begin to wrestle with the larger, missional issues of how their church is going to make a difference in their community. Internal bickering often drops from sight and new energy is released in the group. I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit has a special blessing for any group of believers that is willing to put aside their own self-interests and focus on the needs of their “neighbors.” I have seen it happen time and time again, and it is my prayer that your group will experience the same blessing as it implements this activity.

Ministry with Community Leaders

This is a session about how to study our community, so this is a little off the subject. Yet, the business of the church is always ministry. How can our congregation have a personal ministry with community leaders? These influential individuals are much less likely to show up at a Revelation Seminar or enroll in Bible lessons than are the general public. They can be classified as a “hard to reach” group. Nonetheless, there are ways



to reach out to community leaders and develop personal relationships.

As you interview community leaders or have other contact with them, you can at least place in their hands a simple fact sheet and some attractive publication about our church. This packet should include both local and international information. It is very inexpensive to obtain the “Facts about the Seventh-day Adventist Church” leaflet from the conference communication department and to prepare a typed fact sheet about our local congregation, Adventist Community Services unit, etc. More elaborate publications are available through the denomination and could be prepared to describe our local ministries. It is important when you select materials to give to community leaders, that you choose publications that do not have a strong evangelistic appeal. Community leaders will be insulted if they feel that you are attempting to recruit them as a member of the church.

You can invite community leaders to speak at the church. In many cases it may not be appropriate for them to be the preacher on Sabbath, but you can develop special opportunities. Elected officials are often willing to make short “remarks” on ceremonial occasions. For example, if you are presenting the Community Service Award to some volunteer who has done exemplary work, you could ask the mayor or a health official or other appropriate leader to make the presentation. Or you can present the Community Service Award to a community leader to honor them for specific accomplishments which the church wants to encourage.

Invite community leaders to speak on issues that are important to them at special events related to those issues. At a “Health Sabbath” event you could invite an appropriate leader to address an issue such as protecting the drinking water in the community or control of teen smoking. The pastor may also preach, providing some basic reasons from the Bible why believers should be concerned about their health and that of their neighbors. In this special event, Bible principles and a contemporary concern come together. This is the kind of event to which many non-members could be invited to get an introductory view of Adventist faith. At a Home and School Association meeting or parenting seminar, you could invite a family counselor or mental health official to speak about preventing domestic violence or how to spot the possibility of learning disorders. There are many occasions in the life of the church when a community leader can provide helpful information.

A forum series could be organized to introduce church members to the needs in the community, and to introduce community leaders to the congregation. Each forum would allow one, two or three community leaders to discuss a particular area of need and tell how the church can help with this need. If three to six forums were held over as many weeks or months, it would provide a good overall introduction that would both help the congregation understand the community and introduce it to a number of community leaders as a group interested in helping the community. An example of this type of community forum is displayed in Handout 4.

Another approach is to invite community leaders to come and meet with a smaller group such as the community outreach committee, the interview team, or a task force that is to

develop specific program. Set up an appointment with a different community leader each week for ten weeks, for example. Each leader who meets with the group would be invited to first give a talk on what they think about the needs and issues in the community. Then, the group would enter into dialogue with the individual, asking questions, etc. This a good way to educate your group, meet influential leaders, get into issues, and understand how others deal with those issues.

It is best to begin this series after interviewing community leaders so that, based on the interviews, you can invite the leaders who seem most interesting or relevant to the topics your group is interested in. It is important that your group know something about the community and its needs before you start this series of meetings.

This is a process that a team of four to twelve church members can work on for three to six months. It is a very educational process for your outreach team as well as a good way to begin to develop contacts in the community. It provides something concrete to do in community outreach before any decisions have to be made about a long-term program and it gets the group's "creative juices" going.

In order to build a long-term, in-depth relationship with a community leader, it is essential to find a concrete activity through which you can collaborate with the leader. For example, you might ask the leader to serve on a Community Advisory Council for a community service center or Inner City program. Or, you might agree to join a group headed by the leader and participate toward their goals. For example, the Ontario (California) Adventist Community Services (ACS) board invited the chair of the City of Ontario Community Relations Commission about the need for a free clinic in the area. When the center started a community clinic later that year, it was because of this contact that they were able to send a representative to the commission to meet each month with representatives from all of the social services and health organizations in that town.

These relationships can move to more complicated collaborations that actually bring your organization into an inter-organizational relationship with the leader's organization. As the community leader sees your commitment to the goals he or she is pursuing to improve the community, and as you prove to be a reliable partner willing to work hard on whatever needs to be done, your friendship will grow. If you stay clear of the infighting and politics that exist to some degree in every community, the leader will see you as a person he or she can trust; a person of integrity and faith.

Eventually, as life events occur providing appropriate opportunities, you will find a chance to speak personally with the community leader about his or her spiritual life. You may have opportunity to say, "Do you mind if I pray for you?" The leader may eventually trust you sufficiently to ask questions and enter into dialog about religious topics. This is how ministry develops with influential "thought leaders" in the community.

Civic Clubs and Community Organizations

One way to extend an Adventist presence into our community, especially among the influentials, is by encouraging church members to join civic clubs and various community organizations. About one in five (19%) of Adventist church board members currently belong to a civic club and it is likely that some of the members of your congregation are already belong to local organizations in your community. (Sahlin, p. 145)



This approach is useful in two ways. Number one, it can be a conduit for information about what is going on in the community. Church members who belong to civic clubs hear reports and presentations with information that should be shared with others within the congregation. Number two, it can also be an avenue to get information out into the community. Church members who belong to community groups can go to those meetings and pass out information about activities that the church is providing for the community.

For example, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, Pennsylvania, had a very active community health program. One of the church members belonged to the Rotary Club, and the pastor was invited to speak to the Rotary Club about “heart disease prevention” and later about “stress management.” Every time the church had a health screening event or health education seminar, that Rotary Club was happy to distribute brochures to all of its members. A number of those individuals began to ask for additional supplies of the brochures to pass out among their employees or at their church.

If you network with church members who belong to the civic clubs in the community, this can become an active channel of communication and ministry. In fact, this networking approach is one of the few avenues available to the church to reach the influentials in your community.

The Lions Club is the largest of the civic organizations across the country. It is best known for programs aiding the blind and preventing blindness, but Lions Clubs also serve youth through activities such as drug awareness programs in high schools and have programs related to diabetes, the environment and hearing loss. These clubs sponsor free eye screening programs using mobile eye clinics. Lions Clubs sponsor eye surgery camps overseas where cataract surgeries are performed at no charge for the poor. Many clubs collect old eye glasses for distribution to the needy in other countries.



Founded 1917 in Chicago with the motto “We Serve,” which “precisely explains its mis-

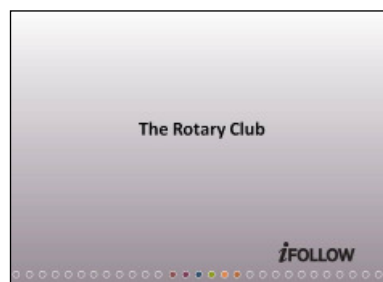
sion,” Lions stands for “Liberty, Intelligence, Our Nation’s Safety” and also makes a subtle reference to a 19th century phrase, “the lions of the community,” as a way of referring to influential civic leaders. Dedicated to the idea that “the men and women who live in a community are in the best position to know who needs help and why,” the organization is both non-partisan and non-sectarian.

Not a social club, Lions members give their time to raise funds for charitable organizations in their communities and internationally. It also promotes values of loyalty, integrity, sincerity, liberality, purity, and generosity. Membership is open to adults (men and women) “of good reputation in the community,” and is by invitation only. There are 1.4 million members in about 45,000 clubs in 185 countries, so each local club averages about 30 members.

The founder, Melvin Jones was a Chicago insurance man who felt that local business clubs, of which he was an active member, should expand their horizons from purely business concerns to community betterment. Representatives from 22 of these local business clubs in nine states formed the “Association of Lions Clubs” to promote this concept. Within ten years, 1,183 local clubs had become part of the movement with some 60,000 members.

In an era that prided itself on mercenary individualism was born what has remained one of the main tenets of Lions clubs, “the financial betterment of its members” was not to be “its object.” More than \$148,600,000 has been raised for eye hospitals in places like India and Africa and uncounted additional amounts for many humanitarian projects locally and nationally.

The Rotary Club is the original service club, formed in Chicago in 1905 by lawyer Paul P. Harris and three friends—a merchant, a coal dealer, and a mining engineer. “Harris wished to recapture the friendly spirit he had felt in the small town where he had grown up.” The name “Rotary” was derived from the early practice of rotating meetings among members’ offices. Within ten years it grew to 200 clubs and 20,000 members, and today there are 1.2 million members in about 30,000 local clubs around the world. There is an average of about 40 members in each club.



Club members “volunteer their efforts to improve the quality of life in their own communities and beyond.” Local clubs meet weekly and are non-political, non-religious, and open to all cultures, races, and creeds. The Rotary Club seeks to include a cross-section of local business and professional leaders, sometimes following a rule of “one of each”—one physician, one real estate broker, one hardware store owner, etc.

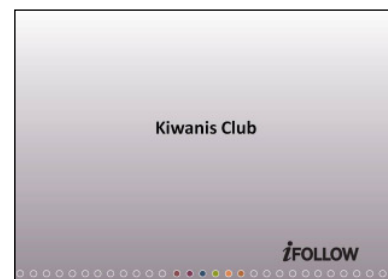
Local clubs initiate community projects that address many of today’s most critical issues, such as violence, drug abuse, youth, AIDS, hunger, the environment, and illiteracy. Each local club selects projects based on local needs. The international headquarters of Rotary

is currently providing resources for programs focusing on polio, AIDS, environmental conservation, world hunger, the aging, disaster relief, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, international relations, literacy, urban violence, world peace, economic development grants and college scholarships. Rotary also sponsors Interact clubs for teens and Rotaract clubs for young adults to enable young people to learn leadership skills and the importance of community service.

Rotary Clubs raise about \$90 million each year for international programs to improve health care systems, support sustainable sources of food and water, and provide literacy and vocational training particularly in developing countries. Its program to fight polio has immunized one billion children since 1985 and it sponsors the world's largest privately funded source of international scholarships.

“Service above Self” is the historic motto of the Rotary Club. It promotes values of goodwill, peace, humanitarian service, and high ethical standards in business and private life. One of the most widely known statements of business ethics is the “Rotary 4-Way Test” created in 1932 when a member was asked to take charge of a company that was facing bankruptcy. The 4-way test asks of any business proposal or practice, “1. Is it the Truth? 2. Is it Fair to all concerned? 3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships? 4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?” In 1989, Rotary Clubs felt there was a need for more specific guidelines of high ethical standards and published the “Declaration of Rotarians in Businesses and Professions.”

Kiwanis Clubs have about 320,000 members in 8,000 local clubs in 83 nations and sponsor programs for children, youth and young adults. A sampling of these activities include purchasing, building and maintaining both Boy and Girl Scout facilities, sponsoring Little League, Bobby Sox and Babe Ruth teams, community services such as senior care and helping women learn to start their own businesses, and an international campaign to eliminate Iodine Deficiency Disorders, the leading cause of preventable mental and physical retardation, from the globe. Kiwanis Clubs also raise funds for other charities. Its total fund raising is about \$70 million a year. The goal of these service clubs is “Serving the children of the world.”



The average Kiwanis Club member is 55.1 years old, a college graduate, married, and a homeowner. He or she is an owner or manager of a firm in the \$25 million or less range. Membership was opened to women in 1987, and there are now more than 51,000 women members. About one in seven local club presidents is a woman.

The name “Kiwanis” is a coined word taken from the language of an American Indian tribe which lived near Detroit, Michigan, where the first Kiwanis Club was started in 1915. The original phrase was “nunc keewanis,” meaning “self expression,” and it was shortened

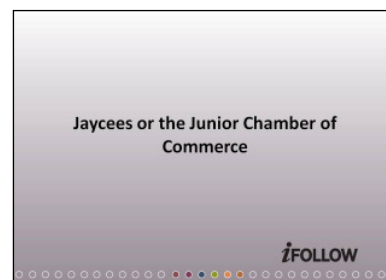
to “Kiwanis.” The Kiwanis motto is “We build,” referring to their efforts to build stronger communities.

The Kiwanis Club in your community is composed of men and women from a wide variety of occupations and professions, including retirees, who have the desire to become personally involved in making their communities better places in which to live. “As a group, these men and women achieve what individuals cannot do alone. Working together, Kiwanians voluntarily share the challenge of community improvement and leadership, assuming personal responsibility for humanitarian and civic projects that public authorities are not prepared or able to perform. These projects are predominantly local in nature.”

Kiwanis also sponsors affiliated youth organizations. Circle K International has 10,800 members on 560 university and college campuses, Key Club International has 194,000 members in 4,574 high schools, there are Builders Clubs in 2,000 junior high and middle schools, and K-Kids for elementary school students.

Six “permanent objectives” of Kiwanis International were voted by delegates at a 1924 convention in Denver: (1) To give primacy to the human and spiritual rather than to the material values of life. (2) To encourage the daily living of the Golden Rule in all human relationships. (3) To promote the adoption and the application of higher social, business, and professional standards. (4) To develop, by precept and example, a more intelligent, aggressive, and serviceable citizenship. (5) To provide a practical means to form enduring friendships, to render altruistic service, and to build better communities. (6) To cooperate in creating and maintaining that sound public opinion and high idealism which make possible the increase of righteousness, justice, patriotism, and goodwill.

Jaycees or the Junior Chamber of Commerce represents the younger leaders in your community, where the other civic clubs usually tend to be dominated by middle-aged and older people. The goal of Jaycees is to provide young adults (ages 21 through 39) “the tools they need [for] success ... in business development, management skills, individual training, community service, and international connections.” Established in 1920, Jaycees helped establish airmail service in America with Charles Lindbergh, who was a member. The group has raised millions of dollars for causes such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the March of Dimes. They build parks, playgrounds, hospitals, ball fields, and housing for the elderly and conduct other service programs in thousands of communities nationwide. The focus is volunteerism and enlarging opportunities for young people.



The organization was founded in St. Louis, Missouri, by Henry “Hy” Giessenbier with the goal of allowing young men to develop their business skills and reputations in the community. “In his era, most young men were out of school and working by the age of 15. Their first jobs were most likely the jobs they held throughout their lives. With luck and hard work, some might reach executive positions by their forties. Giessenbier felt that

young men were not receiving the opportunities necessary to develop their skills at a younger age, thus depriving our nation of an important resource.”

In the 1930s the Jaycees sponsored the establishment of the National Wildlife Federation, which has become one of the major conservation organizations in America and began to name the Ten Outstanding Young Men each year. After World War II, the organization first organized golf events in collaboration with the Professional Golf Association (PGA) and supported statehood for Alaska and Hawaii. In 1961 the Jaycees offered their first Governmental Affairs Leadership Seminar, and in the next two years campaigned for the nationwide adoption of the Uniform Vehicle Code and launched a clean water program to improve the quality of drinking water in communities across America. In the 1970s they initiated the “Do Something” campaign which sparked national interest in volunteerism, helping to found the National Center for Voluntary Action, and worked to reduce alcohol abuse in educational campaign that reached more than 23 million Americans. In 1984 the Jaycees changed their bylaws to admit women as full and regular members, and in 1986 the first woman was honored as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Americans. More recently, the organization has coordinated voter registration campaigns, helped with disaster response, launched environmental education and action projects, and worked to build a nationwide network of care facilities for children and adolescents affected by HIV/AIDS. Of particular interest to Seventh-day Adventists, the JAYS club for kids was reintroduced in 1999 as an educational program that informs children about the dangers of smoking.

The Jaycees official statement of values says, “We Believe: That faith in God gives meaning and purpose to human life; that the brotherhood of man transcends the sovereignty of nations; that economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise; that government should be of laws rather than of men; that earth’s great treasure lies in human personality; and that service to humanity is the best work of life.”

None of the civic clubs described here include the objectionable elements found in Masonic organizations and other “lodges.” They have no ideology or philosophy beyond the promotion of basic democratic and communitarian values. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* in its description of church standards, includes a section entitled “Community Relationships” which states that “in every community where they live Seventh-day Adventists, as children of God, should be recognized as outstanding citizens in their Christian integrity and in working for the common good of all.... We should support by our service and our means, as far as possible and consistent, all proper efforts for social order and betterment.” (*Church Manual*, 16th Edition, pp. 162-163)

Are Civic Clubs Disappearing?

Robert Wuthnow, Robert Putnam, and other researchers have documented a decline in the traditional civic organizations across America. “Among service clubs, the Federation



of Women's Clubs has experienced a loss of 59% since 1964; membership in Lions Clubs is down by nearly 70,000 members (12%) since 1986; membership in Jaycees, down 44% since 1979; and the Red Cross has 61% fewer volunteers than in 1970. ... Membership in the NAACP dropped from approximately 450,000 in 1976 to 356,000 in 1994. ... From 1974 to 1994, according to national surveys, the proportions holding memberships in [similar] groups dropped from 14% to 10%” of the population. (Wuthnow, pp. 76-77; Putnam; Pettinico; *Statistical Abstract of the US*, Table 424)

Surprisingly, volunteerism has increased over the same period of time that membership in civic clubs has declined. Both the percentage of Americans who volunteer for community service activities and the average number of hours volunteered has grown significantly from about 18% in 1965 to nearly 50% in the late 1990s. The average amount of time donated by each volunteer has increased from less than a half hour per week in 1965 to nearly an hour per week. (Jencks; *Statistical Abstract of the US*, Table 420) Gallup Polls indicate that the percentage of Americans who say they have engaged in some kind of “charity or social service activity in the past year” has grown from 26% in 1977 to 46% in 1991. (Public Opinion Online)

The bottom line is that Americans appear to be moving away from membership organizations which plan and implement their own “amateur” community service projects with help from national resource staff toward nonprofit organizations with local professional staff who develop and coordinate volunteer activities. In fact, we are in the midst of a major shift and remains to be seen what the outcome will be.

This shift does not negate the importance of civic clubs as a way to connect with the leaders in the community for at least the next couple of decades. The nature of the power structure of a community changes more slowly than do other aspects of social systems. As total membership in civic clubs declines, it is the less important leaders who drop out first. The reduced circle in the civic clubs reflect the more powerful and important figures in your community. There remains almost no other visible, easy to contact avenues to identify and connect with the most influential people in your community.

New structures are emerging in many communities. One of these is the “alliance” or “coalition,” sometimes called a “network of groups” or “an organization of organizations.” This type of community organization tends to focus on a specific, narrow concern instead of broad involvement in many kinds of service. It will seek leaders from government, nonprofits, education, health care, churches and civic clubs—anyone in a position of influence who cares about the goals of the coalition—even businesses and commercial entities may “join.” It does not have a formal constituency of “members,” but permits people to become involved in more flexible ways than have been true in the past.

Someone from your congregation or local ministry can join one or more of these new-style organizations in the community, **if** you can find them. They often do not have the traditional means of visibility that the established civic clubs have, and access to these new alliances is often guarded by community leaders. The civic clubs have always had the

goal of “developing leaders,” and so they accept “potential leaders” as members, especially now that their membership is declining, but the new organizations tend to screen out those who are “not really leaders of a community group.” The least problematic way to conduct this screening is to keep the access to the new organizations unclear and hard to find.

There are also issues related to the new partnership-type organizations relative to the principles of the Adventist Church to remain nonpolitical and unaligned with ecumenical organizations. Both for this reason, and because these organizations generally want only leaders of community service groups to join them, it is best for you to join this new type of structure through Adventist Community Services (ACS), the domestic relief and social action agency sponsored by the Adventist Church, rather than join it as a representative of the Church itself. ACS is the denomination’s “ambassadorial” entity in the outside world of the local community. It is organized as auxiliary to the Church itself, so it is not the Church that is aligned with the community coalition, but ACS. In other words, it is safer for you to seek to join an alliance as director or chaplain of the local ACS unit than it is to seek to join an alliance as pastor or a lay officer of the local Adventist Church. And, you are more likely to be received under this formulation, at least with full partnership, rather than just a “supporting” role. A key issue in this consideration may be funding. Remember, that the churches who join a coalition are generally seen to be donors of funds and volunteers, while the nonprofit agencies that belong to a coalition are generally seen as providing the management expertise and structures to spend the funds and use the volunteers.



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Handouts in this Package

1. Basic Interview Questions
2. Who to Interview
3. Suggested Script for Telephone Call to Set Up an Interview
4. Example of a Community Forum

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Additional Resources

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2005). "Community Relationships," in *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 17th Edition. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association. (See Chapter 13, "Standards of Christian Living.")

Jencks, Christopher (1987). *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook: "Who Gives to What?"*, Table 18.7. Yale University Press.

Pettinico, George (June-July 1996). *Public Perspective: "Civic Participation and American Democracy."*

Putnam, Robert (January 1995). *Journal of Democracy: "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital."*

Sahlin, Monte (1988). *Friendship Evangelism*. Siloam Springs, AR: Concerned Communications. (Details about the specific skills and processes involved in personal ministry in a secular setting.)

Sahlin, Monte (1997). *Manual for Tutoring and Mentoring Projects*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource. Chapter 6 contains detailed information on the many important considerations in formal, inter-organizational collaborations.

Sahlin, Monte (1998). *Trends, Attitudes and Opinions: The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry.

Sahlin, Monte (2004). *One Minute Witness*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry. (A more concise book about personal ministry in a secular setting.)

U.S. Census Bureau (annually). *Statistical Abstract of the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Tables 420, 424.

Wuthnow, Robert (1998). *Loose Connections*. Harvard University Press.

Video & DVD

Sahlin, Monte (1997). *Community Action Leadership Video Seminar*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry. Available in DVD.

Sahlin, Monte and Rittenour, Curtis (2000). *Friend2Friend: Reaching the Unchurched Through Friendship Evangelism*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry. (Personal ministry in a secular setting; the official curriculum on friendship evangelism for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.)

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important for us to understand the power structure of our community?
2. In your view, why has it been often difficult for Seventh-day Adventist churches to become involved in communities at this level? What could or should be changed, and how?
3. Would it change the atmosphere or attitude of our congregation if the mayor attended there? How?
4. Share what civic or community groups you belong to. Has it expanded or changed your witness?

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Group Activity

Purpose: To give the participants practice making a phone call to get an interview. They can get a feel for how easy it is and gain confidence in implementing the plan.

Preparation: Have copies of Handout 3 available. If the group is small, you only need one pair of chairs, set back to back, in front of the group. If it is large, place groups of three chairs some distance from each other, with two chairs back to back and the third chair facing them.

Assignment: Option 1. (For a small group.) Have pairs of people sit in chairs back to back (so they have no eye contact). Designate one as a community leader (the principal of a nearby public school, for example) and the other as the person to practice making the phone call. Let the person practicing have the handout in front of them, if they wish. When it is time to start, making a ringing sound like a telephone. The person pretending to be a community leader should answer the phone in a normal fashion, and the other person should go from there with a one-minute conversation in a realistic fashion.

Option 2. (For a larger group.) Break the larger group into teams of three and have each team practice the phone call at the same time, with the third person as the observer, giving feedback to the individual practicing. If there are three rotations within the teams of three, then every individual in the larger group will have an opportunity to practice making the phone call to set up an interview.

Time: If in a larger group, allow a few minutes to get people divided into teams of three, and to give instructions. Each “phone call” should only last a minute or two. Even if you are rotating in teams of three, the whole exercise should be no longer than 15-20 minutes.

Debrief: After the practice, get everyone back into a circle and ask people to report on what they saw and heard. How would they do it differently? Additional practice rounds can be done to help the group get the skill in hand.

Handout 1

Basic Interview Questions

1. My church wants to help with some of the most important needs in our community: What are some of the important needs that you think it might be a good idea for us to focus on?
2. What could a church group do that would really be helpful in the needs you have listed? (Go through the list one-by-one and get as specific as possible on suggestions for each one.)
3. Who are some of the influential leaders in the community we should interview with the same questions?
4. What do you know about my church? What is your impression of its contribution to the community in the past?

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Handout 2

Who to Interview

This is a list of 48 key leadership roles that exist in almost every community across North America. It is organized into six major categories or sectors of community life. Specific, additional questions are suggested that relate to the specialized area of activity of each leader. These are intended to be supplemental to the basic interview questions.

Business

1. Chamber of Commerce manager or executive director. The Chamber is a local organization made up of many of the businesses in town, who join, pay dues and elect the board. Each Chamber hires a person who is the manager or executive, and in larger towns, there are a number of other staff hired, as well as volunteers. The Chamber of Commerce represents the business community and provides services to both tourists and families considering a move to the town. The Chamber also is involved in attracting business to the community, economic development and general public relations on behalf of the community.

You can get a useful packet of community information from the Chamber office, including a list of the major employers in town, a list of community organizations and some demographics for the town. In a larger town, it may not be possible to get an interview with the manager or executive director of the Chamber due to time pressures, etc. You may want to interview an associate. In addition to the basic set of questions in the interview guide for civic leaders, there are some additional questions that you might want to ask a staff person at the Chamber of Commerce: What is the business climate in this community? Who are the largest employers in the community? How much of their shopping do our residents do in our community as compared to how much they drive outside the community to do? What is being done to bring new businesses and jobs into this community? What are the needs of small business people?

2. A local realtor. A relatively small number of real estate firms handle most of the buying and selling of property in any community. The people who work in these companies often specialize in homes or investment property (rental units) or commercial and industrial buildings. Within their area of specialization and the geographic territory they cover, these individuals have a very good knowledge of what is happening in the community. More than many people, they have specific knowledge of the neighborhoods and you can ask an individual from a real estate office their impressions about specific neighborhoods. In addition to the basic questions, you could ask a realtor some of the following additional questions: What kind of people are moving into or out of this community? Where is new construction taking place? Where is new development likely to happen next? What are

the trends in land value and land use? Is there a good supply of moderately-priced housing for low and middle-income families? What is the trend relative to single family homes and multi-unit housing? What about tax rates? How are they changing and what does that mean for the future of the community?

3. The proprietor of a retail business. Any person who has successfully operated a store, service station or other retail business in the community must have information about the people his or her business serves. In addition to the basic set of questions, you may want to ask a retail business proprietor or manager some of these questions: What changes have taken place in this community over the years? What changes in the attitude of the public? What is the trend now and in the future for small businesses?

4. An official in the leading industry in the community. After you find out who the largest private employer is, get an appointment with someone in management in that firm. (This needs to be a person who lives in this community, not a person at a corporate headquarters in some other city.) Of course, this person will have useful answers to the basic set of questions, but you can also ask some of these questions: What is the future for jobs in this community? How are the type of jobs available changing and what kind of training is needed in order for younger adults to get good jobs in this community? What are the community attitudes toward this industry? What is the economic outlook for the community? How are labor relations changing? How does this company encourage its executives to get involved in the community? How does the company deal with diversity in its work-force? What is the approach of this industry to environmental concerns?

5. A union leader. If this is a community where labor unions have a strong influence, it would be well to interview one of the union leaders. Find one who lives in the community instead of a person based at a national or regional headquarters. Often these are volunteers who are not paid to work for the union full-time. In addition to the basic set of questions, you can ask some of these questions: How favorable are the trends relative to wages and working conditions in this community? In what way are relations with management changing? Are there concerns about safety on the job or the environmental impact of any of the industries in this community? What activities or programs does the labor union sponsor to bring improvement in the community?

6. Someone involved in tourist-related business. If travel and tourism is an important part of the local economy, you may want to interview the manager or proprietor of a hotel, restaurant, resort, camp facility or other travel-related business. In addition to the basic list of questions, you should ask them such questions as: How many out-of-town visitors travel to this community each month or year? Where do visitors come from? What portion are here for recreation? What portion on business? How long do they stay? What are some of the special needs of this group?

7. A local banker. Executives in the banking industry are in a key position to know about the local economy, trends and projections. Many large chains now have a “community banking officer” in the major metropolitan areas. In small towns the manager of a local

bank or branch is someone you can schedule an interview with. He or she is often very involved in civic clubs and other local activities. In addition to the basic list of questions, here are some questions that a banker can answer: What are the retail business trends in this community? Population and housing trends? What are the trends relative to industry, jobs and the overall economic position of this community? How do you see future growth and development unfolding over the next few years and in the long term? What is happening to this community?

Education

8. Principal of the nearest public school. Unless many students are bused from distant neighborhoods, the elementary school usually reflects most clearly the characteristics of a community. The principal usually knows children personally, has met many of the parents and has some idea of family life in the community. In addition to the basic set of questions in the interview guide for civic leaders, there are some additional questions that you might want to ask a school principal: What is the enrollment of your school? Over the last decade, has enrollment increased or declined? What do you foresee anything that might change enrollment in the next few years? What is the rate of new children transferring into your school and children transferring out to other schools? What causes this movement? What kind of ethnic and cultural diversity is there in your school? What impressions do you have about the types of families that children come from in your school? What percentages come from two-career families? What percentages are from single-parent families? What percentages come from traditional families? What percentages of your students live below the poverty line? What percentages qualify for the subsidized school lunch program? How well does this community support its schools? What level of support has been given in recent years to school bonds and tax levies? Does your school provide special education classes? If so, for what kinds of special needs? What percentages of your students are involved? Do you feel that there are people not being reached by the special education program? Have you developed any educational innovations or focused programs at your school? What types of after-school programs are offered? Is there a need for a volunteer tutoring or mentoring program? Do you have a summer recreational program or summer school program? Have you had to deal with budget cuts or staff reductions in recent years? Is there a need for improvements in the physical plant? What are some of your personal concerns for the children in this community, or for the community in general?

9. A student leader at the public high school. It is probably best to request such an interview through the school office. You might want to meet with two or three of the key student leaders during the lunch hour at the school cafeteria. They are in a position to give you a unique perspective in terms of how teenagers view the community. With student leaders, you will need to modify the basic set of questions used in all the interviews with civic leaders, and there are some additional questions that you may want to ask: What are the most popular student activities? What percentages of students participate

in these activities? Is there a wide enough range of extracurricular activities for students in addition to the sports program at the school? What are the important issues relative to education and youth in our community? Are there changes that need to be made in school policy?

10. Superintendent of the public school district or an associate administrator. In a large, urban school district it will be almost impossible to get time with the top official. A staff associate who directs planning or community relations may be the person that, realistically, you can schedule an interview with. You want someone who can give an overview of the public school system, its achievements and needs. In addition to the standard questions that are used in all of the interviews with civic leaders, there are some additional questions that this person should be able to answer: What information can you share with me about enrollment trends, ethnic diversity, special education programs, after-school programs, and adult education? What are the policies regarding use of school facilities by community organizations for recreation, cultural and community service programs? What plans are there for new school construction or for school closures? Are any significant changes planned for school policies?

11. Director of adult education for the school district or the community college. This individual is a key player in meeting adult education needs in the community. In addition to the standard questions that are used in all of the interviews with civic leaders, there are some additional questions that this person should be able to answer: What degree and non-degree programs are offered in the area of adult and continuing education? What are the enrollment trends? What are the most popular programs currently? Are any new programs being planned? What is the policy regarding off-site courses sponsored by interested groups in the community? Are courses being taught through cable television, teleconferencing or the Internet? What needs related to adult education in the community are not currently being met?

12. President, dean or other administrator at the nearest college or university. Not every community has a college or university located in the neighborhood, although most are served by a community college (two-year programs). If there is such an institution in the community, it can be an important source of information and resources. In addition to the standard questions that are used in all of the interviews with civic leaders, there are some additional questions that a college administrator should be able to answer: What are the enrollment trends and projections at the institution? What kind of ethnic diversity can be found among the students and faculty? What kinds of degrees and programs does the school offer? What are the most popular programs on campus? What percentages of the students live on campus, live in the community, and commute from outside the community? Are there expansion plans for the institution? What is your view of the relationships between the institution and the community? How might the school be a resource to the community?

13. College/university student leaders. The president of the student body and the editor of the campus newspaper might be interviewed, as well as other leaders of key groups

and programs. In addition to the standard questions that are used in all of the interviews with civic leaders, there are some additional questions that this person should be able to answer: What do you see as the attitudes expressed in the community toward this school? What work opportunities do students have in the community? Are there unique strengths and characteristics of this institution that might become a significant resource to the community? Is there a student volunteer service program operating at this school? If so, what kinds of activities are student volunteers involved with in this community? How might community organizations work with the student volunteer program?

Government

14. Mayor. This is the chief elected official in municipal government. In larger cities, this is a full-time job and the mayor is the chief executive officer of the city government. In most suburban and smaller towns, a professional city manager is hired by the city council to be the chief administrative officer for the town and the mayor is chairman of the city council. Many of the standard questions in the interview guide for other civic leaders may not be appropriate when interviewing the mayor. There are some questions that are more appropriate to this position: What is the trend in population change for the town? What factors contribute to this trend? What are the primary sources of jobs in the town? Are these changing? How adequate is the infrastructure of the community: roads, bridges, mass transit, airport, railroad, highway connections, water, power, sewage and solid waste disposal? How does the town govern land use? What are the trends in land use? What community groups do you hear from the most often? What are their concerns? How healthy is the central business district? What percentage of stores is empty? Is there sufficient off-street parking? What community services are most effective? Which are least effective?

15. City manager. If a community where there is a professional city manager hired to function as the chief administrative officer of the municipal government and the mayor is not a full-time chief executive, then this individual is a very important person to interview. In larger towns, it may prove impossible to get some of his or her time, and you may need to interview an associate or assistant city manager. Again, many of the standard questions in the interview guide for other civic leaders will not be appropriate when interviewing the city manager. The questions listed above for the mayor can be used with the city manager too.

16. County executive. This office goes by many titles; chairman of the board of commissioners or board of supervisors, presiding commissioner, or county judge, among others. A county usually includes a number of towns and so the perspective of this official will be more broad than just one community. Again, many of the standard questions in the interview guide for other civic leaders will not be appropriate when interviewing a county executive. The questions listed above for the mayor can be used with a county executive if they are modified to take into account the wider perspective of this official.

17. Planning department. This is often a city department, but in smaller towns there is no planning department in the municipal government and the functions are handled by the county planning department. This is a **very important source of information** and excellent maps. This office can supply you with demographics, land use maps, show which neighborhoods are growing and where new development is likely to happen, housing patterns, and the character of specific neighborhoods in terms of the type of housing and commercial/residential mix, etc. In cities of 50,000 or more in population, the planning department usually has a document that describes each of the neighborhoods in the city. This is particularly helpful in identifying and understanding your community. In addition to requesting information, documents and maps, most of the basic questions used in all interviews with civic leaders can be used to interview the director or an associate in the planning department, as well as the additional questions listed for the major above.

18. Law enforcement officer. In a large city, you will not likely be able to interview the police chief. There may be an assistant chief for community relations or planning. In a small town or rural area, it may be best to interview the county sheriff. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of a ranking law enforcement official: Is crime on the increase or decline in this community? What types of crimes are a particular problem? How might citizens help to prevent such crimes? How many crime and public safety problems in this community are related to drug use, alcohol, etc.? Is there a problem with juvenile delinquency? How might volunteers help with this particular problem?

19. A local judge. Judges have a unique perspective on the problems in the community, including divorce and family problems, business disputes that end up in law suits, traffic accidents, as well as crime and juvenile delinquency. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that could be asked of a judge: Is there a backlog in the criminal justice system? If so, how bad is it? Are the jails and prisons overcrowded? If so, what are the results? How effective is the probation and parole system? What alternative placements are available for juveniles, first-time offenders, etc.? How might a group of Christian volunteers address the values of our community?

20. The chair or a member of the human relations commission. In larger cities and some suburban towns, there is a commission charged with taking steps to improve race relations and cross-cultural communication. They often hear complaints from minority groups and try to settle community disputes, etc. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of the chair, or a member, or the staff coordinator for this entity: Does the commission or board simply respond to complaints from citizens or groups? Or, does it have some strategy or plan for improving human relations in the community? What are some of the issues that have surfaced in recent years? How might a volunteer group help to improve human relations in our community?

21. Employment service. State, county and larger city governments usually have departments that assist the unemployed both with financial assistance and help in finding a new job. This is the entity that officially tracks the level of unemployment, the number of available jobs, the percentage of women and minorities in the work force, etc. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, you will want to ask the person you interview in this office about job trends, the growth of local industry, the need for day care and availability of job training.

22. Welfare office. Since “welfare” has become a bad word for many in contemporary politics, this department of the county government is now often called “Human Services” or something else. You will want to interview a supervisor or social worker about the extent of poverty in the community, its causes and the needs of the poor. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of this particular official: What is the status of the changes initiated under “welfare reform” in the U.S.? What other programs are administered by this office, including aid to the blind, aged and disabled, and General Assistance? How many individuals or households are currently enrolled in each of these programs and what have been the trends over the past few years? How many cases is each case worker assigned? What percentage of the total need is each program serving? What needs to be done to end poverty in this community?

23. Urban renewal or rural development official. This function operates under a wide variety of titles. Many towns, especially in rural areas, do not have an entity of this nature. If you are able to interview a development official, in addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of this individual: What projects have been achieved and which are being planned? What has happened to the families that have been displaced? What steps have been taken to insure fairness to the families (especially low-income households) forced to relocate by development projects?

24. Housing authority. This government entity may be called housing commission or Public Housing Department or other, similar titles in some places. It is responsible for construction and operation of low-cost housing for the poor and senior citizens. Many suburban and rural towns have no such organization, and in those settings the function may be handled by a county agency. In many places there is no such organization at any level. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of officials at a housing authority: What kind of low-cost or subsidized housing is available in the community? How long must eligible families wait to get such housing? How many are on the waiting list? Is there one or more buildings specifically to provide low-cost housing for senior citizens? What additional services are included? Is there a transitional housing facility for the homeless? Are there meeting rooms for community events in one or more of the housing projects? If so, what services are being provided there currently? What programs are needed? What are the guidelines for community organizations wishing to make use of these meeting

rooms? Is there a policy under which an entire apartment might be made available for a community organization to set up an office, clinic, classroom or service center in a major housing complex? Obtain a copy of the policy document(s).

25. County extension service. The Agricultural Extension Service is a local government entity connected with the state universities and Federal department of agriculture. The purpose of the “extension agents” is to teach improved agricultural and homemaking techniques to farmers, their families and the general public. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of a county extension agent: What are the agricultural and environmental trends in the community? How many families make their living in farming or farm part-time? What programs does the extension service provide for nutrition education, 4-H Clubs for children, FFA (Future Farmers of America) for youth, homemaker assistance, etc.? How does it collaborate with other community organizations?

26. A parks and recreation official. The city or county parks and recreation department, commission or authority plans and operates parks and open space, provides recreational programs for all ages, including playgrounds, gyms, swimming pools, cultural centers, etc. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of this official: How adequate are the facilities in this community? What age groups receive the most attention? What age groups are left out of planning and programs? Have there been cutbacks in recent years?

27. Environmental resources official. County governments or local offices of the state/province government have units responsible for conservation of natural resources. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of an environmental protection official: What standards govern the quality of air, water, solid waste disposal, handling of toxic substances, etc., in this community? What exceptions to these standards have been permitted? Where are Environmental Impact Statements filed, and how do members of the general public have access to them? How can volunteers help with conservation efforts in our community?

28. A transportation official. Especially in metropolitan areas, mass transit facilities are an important issue. In both urban and rural areas, the state of repair of the highways, bridges and related infrastructure is important. In addition to the basic set of questions used in all interviews with civic leaders, there are several other questions that should be asked of a mass transit or roads department official: What public transportation services are available to this community? What are current plans for increasing such services? Have new forms of mass transit been proposed or tried in the past? What plans are there to up-grade the highways, streets, bridges and other facilities that serve our community?

Health and Social Services

29. United Way or council of agencies administrator. Almost all communities have an organization to which the various nonprofit community service and health care agencies belong. It may be involved in fund raising—the central purpose of the United Way or Community Chest type of group—or it may be involved only in coordination. Sometimes it is called a “community coordinating council” or “case conference committee” of some kind. Whatever the organization is called, the top staff persons in the office are in a position to know about the needs in the community and the range of services currently operating, as well as areas of unmet need. In addition to the basic set of questions, these are some particular items you will want to address to this person: What surveys or studies have been done by various organizations in this community and how can a copy of the reports be obtained? Ask for a directory or listing of the social service agencies and health care organizations in this community. What kind of funding is available to nonprofit organizations that have government-recognized status for accepting tax-deductible donations but are not a member of the United Way (or similar group)? Does the United Way provide opening funding based on community needs? Does it enter into purchase-of-services contracts with non-member organizations? Does it pass through designated donations, allowing donors to designate some or all of their giving to specific agencies? What are the regular (annual, monthly or more often) meetings that leaders of service agencies attend? What is the protocol for a new agency to begin to participate in these meetings?

30. Health director. Every county has a health department and a county health director. Many larger cities have a health department and director. The director is usually a physician, and there is almost always a chief nursing official too—a public health nurse. These officials are concerned about infectious diseases, public safety issues, the adequacy of health care—especially among groups which may have difficulty getting access to health care in the community—and overall issues of disease prevention and wellness. The Adventist Church, with its historic concern about wellness and health care, should be a natural ally of these public officials. It is likely that they are already aware of various aspects of Adventist health ministry; the hospitals sponsored by the Church, research at Loma Linda University, and perhaps the Five-day Plan to Stop Smoking, the Heartbeat Community Coronary Risk Evaluation or other health screening programs. In addition to the basic set of questions, you should ask these officials the following: How adequate are hospital services and urgent care facilities? What is the ratio of doctors and nursing personnel to the population? What is being done in prevention and wellness in this community? How can paraprofessional volunteers best get involved in health promotion activities in this community?

31. Mental health official. There may be a community mental health center or a county department of mental health. The director of this entity is concerned with the control of addiction, violence and mental illness as well as the support and care of people with cognitive and emotional disabilities. In many ways mental health issues are even closer to the

mission of the church than are physical health and wellness issues, so this can be a very important contact to make. In a major metropolitan area, you will likely need to talk to a planning officer or a coordinator of prevention and community relations instead of the director. After asking the core list of questions, it would be a good idea to continue the interview with a mental health official with the following more specific questions: How would you evaluate the alcohol and drug abuse treatment programs in this community? What is being done to prevent substance abuse, especially among young people? And what more needs to be done in this area? Which age group is most prominent among mental health patients in this community? What are the most common needs? Is there a mental health care system in this community? How does it relate to other community organizations? How strong are mental health prevention activities in this community? What are some unmet needs in the prevention area specifically?

32. Leaders of key ethnic organizations. Your community will likely have a local chapter of the NAACP or Urban League or some other civil rights organization, if not within the community itself, then representing the metropolitan area or rural region where you are. Depending on the ethnic profile of your community, there may also be an Hispanic umbrella organization or associations representing specific ethnic backgrounds such as Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans, German-Americans, etc., and Native Americans. Interview with the leaders of these organizations will give you insight to segments of the community which will otherwise be lost in more generic discussions. In addition to the basic set of questions, you will want to ask the following specific questions: What are some of the current, local concerns in your ethnic community? How do you perceive community attitudes toward your ethnic group? Are there particular unmet needs in the community that are of concern within your ethnic group which may be ignored or given low priority by the larger community?

33. An area agency on aging executive. Most regions have an organization charged with the coordination and oversight of services for senior citizens. This may be a multi-county region in rural areas, or a metropolitan area agency or a city department in the largest cities. If you cannot find such an organization or get an appointment with one of the staff, individuals working in nursing homes, senior housing facilities and other services for the elderly can give you information about the needs and concerns of older adults in the community. There are several specific topics you will want to ask about in addition to the core set of questions used in all of these interviews: Is there adequate housing for senior citizens in this community, including retirement facilities, adult day care, assisted living facilities and nursing homes? What is being done to assure the quality of the group living institutions? What are the needs in this community relative to nutrition for the elderly? Are there sufficient group meals provided by churches and other organizations? What volunteer programs assist the aged? Is there a need for more volunteer groups to get involved?

34. A child care professional. In a number of states there are regional and local officials responsible for licensing and assuring the quality of child care programs. You might be

able to interview one of these officials, who would have good information about the overall adequacy of child care and the needs in the community. If you cannot locate this type of official, the director of a day care center or preschool may be able to answer questions about the need for child care throughout the community. The basic set of questions at the beginning of this section should be used in this interview, and the following specific questions should also be asked: Is there a need for additional child care programs in this community? How big is that need? What about preschool programs and part-day or after-school programs? How much need is there for these programs alongside full-day care? What are the current standards for both facilities and workers in child care? What about home child care—private “babysitting” services—and the regulations related to these services?

35. A family counselor. An interview with a counselor who specializes in marriage, child and family therapy can provide information about trends in family life in the community. There are several specialized questions you will want to ask which may be more relevant than some of the basic list of questions: What are the various styles of family life present in this community? Which segments of the community are associated with these different styles of family living? Are there two or three significant trends in family relationships? What are some of the major causes of tensions, conflict and family breakdown in this community? How adequate are the services for families and single adults? How could a faith-based family life education program help meet some of the needs in this community?

36. Human service institutions. In your community are institutions that provide basic human services and play a key role in the lives of many people. It would be a good idea to interview a key administrator at some of the institutions listed below, if they exist in your area: YMCA or YWCA or similar organization; homes for children who may be orphaned or have special needs; specialized residential schools for disabled or developmentally challenged or other children or young people; prison, jail or halfway house or pre-release center.

37. Leader of an environmental concern group. Issues related to ecology and conservation of natural resources are of growing importance. Organizations that focus on these issues are working for clean drinking water and against air pollution in your community, as well as to protect wildlife and scenic areas. Because the Adventist Church announces a special call to “worship him who created the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Revelation 14:7), it has a special interest in the creation of God as an expression of his character for all to see. Therefore, it would be a good idea to include an interview with one of these leaders in a balanced community assessment. In addition to the basic set of items, you will want to ask these specialized questions in this interview: What is the quality of drinking water in this community as it comes out of the tap? What is being done to control air pollution in this region? Are there toxic sites in the community? What is being done to identify and deal with these sites? Are there other environmental issues that faith-based volunteer groups should be concerned about? What can church volun-

teers do to help cleanup and conserve the natural environment in our community?

38. The VOAD group for your area. Adventist Community Services has a written agreement with the U.S. Federal government as a disaster response organization and it is a founding member of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). This is an important relationship because it gives ACS a status equal to that of the Red Cross in disaster relief operations. VOAD is an inter-agency coordinating body to which organizations, not individuals, belong. The national VOAD and state VOAD groups have existed for a number of years, and now VOAD groups are being organized at the regional, county and metropolitan level too. The ACS director from your conference office sits with the state VOAD group and can probably give you the name of the leader of the local VOAD group in your area. This can be an important interview because of the historic relationship between ACS and VOAD, and the commitment that Adventists have made to help in times of disaster. In addition to the basic interview, there are some specific questions you will want to ask in this interview: What major disaster have occurred in our area in recent years? How have the VOAD-member agencies been involved in these disasters? What role has Adventist Community Services (ACS) had in these disasters? Are there any long-term recovery activities still underway from the most recent major disaster? What role could a local ACS unit have in these activities? What territory does the local VOAD group cover and is there an ACS representative that regularly meets with the group now?

Media

39. A radio executive. Radio stations are among the most localized of the mass media. Each station tends to focus on a particular listening audience, often in a rather limited geographic area. They are licensed by a national government agency because the air waves belong to the general public, not to private owners. Each station is required to do a needs-assessment in the community from time to time in order to get or renew the broadcast license, and this is a public document. You will want to get a copy not only because of what it will tell you about the broadcast industry in your community, but because it includes information that is more widely useful. Larger radio stations often have a community relations director, which is an excellent person to interview. In smaller stations you will want to interview either the general manager or the program director. In addition to the core set of questions, the following questions can be useful in this interview: What are the needs in the community that this station is attempting to address? What kind of people are in the primary listening audience of the station? How does that compare with the other stations in the community and near-by? What is the station's editorial policy for dealing with local issues? How is public service time included in programming? How is it made available to nonprofit groups? How can churches and community action groups make better use of mass media?

40. A television station representative. Television stations cover a much larger area than do radio stations. There tend to be a few television stations in each major metropolitan

area and they relate to a large region or “market area,” instead of being based in local communities. It is unlikely that you will be able to get an appointment with a top executive, but there is almost always a community relations or public affairs director whom you should be able to interview in at least one of the television stations in your area. Television, like radio, must conduct community needs studies for license renewal, and this is a public document. You should ask for a copy. It is rich source of information about the larger metropolitan area. Most of the basic questions are not likely to be relevant in an interview with a staff person from a television station. Instead, use these questions: What kind of local programming is produced at the station? Which of those programs includes time for representatives of community causes to be heard? How is news coverage of local community stories developed? Is there a reporter or producer assigned to this area or to a geographic area? Has the station been involved in sponsoring major community events such as community health fairs? Are there plans for the future?

41. Editor of a local newspaper. Depending on the type of community you are in, this may be a weekly newspaper published for a suburban area or small town, or it may be a daily paper published in a central city. In a large newspaper, you are unlikely to be able to get an interview with the top editor or even the managing editor. Some large daily papers have a director of community relations. In smaller dailies and weekly papers, you should have no problem talking to one of the top editors. Make it clear when you call to get an appointment, you do **not** have a news story to give the paper; you are doing community research. The basic set of questions can be used in this interview, and here are some additional questions you will want to ask: How extensive is the paper’s circulation and what geographic area does it cover? What role does the newspaper see itself as having in educating the residents about issues or mobilizing support for civic goals? What is the editorial policy of the paper regarding local community issues? How are issues selected which the paper will support or fight against? How is neighborhood coverage organized? Are there reporters regularly assigned to certain geographic areas or community-related topics? How does the paper handle news about churches and religion?

42. Manager of a cable television system. Each municipal or county government contracts with a provider of cable television. These contracts almost always make provision for “public access” channels and other locally-originated programming, including things such as live transmission of city council meetings, etc.

Religion

43. Ministerial Association or council of churches. Most communities have either a council of churches or at least an informal association made up of the clergy in the community. The leader may simply be a pastor or lay leader who plays an informal, volunteer role as moderator or chair. Or, it may be a full-time or part-time, paid staff executive. Either way, this leader will be knowledgeable about the churches, synagogues, mosques and other faith communities in this neighborhood. In addition to the core list of questions at the

beginning of this section, there are several specific items that you will want to cover in this interview: Which groups are doing creative programs in this community? Have any new congregations been formed in recent years? What is the average attendance in most of the churches and other faith groups in this community each week? Are there cooperative ministries that churches are doing together? Are there special, annual events, such as a Community Thanksgiving Service? What are the unmet needs in this community that a congregation should consider addressing?

44. Pastor of the nearest church. Which church is located nearest to your church building? Or, which church or churches come closest to serving the same segment of the community that your congregation is targeting? An interview with one or both of these individuals will provide much helpful information. This person may be quite guarded at first, and you may even find it difficult to get them to agree to an interview. You may need to deal with a number of issues involved in their perception of the Adventist Church before the interview can move ahead or even be scheduled. You should ask the introductory set of questions in this interview, and the following, specialized questions: What are some of the most important current trends or events in our neighborhood or segment of the community? What have you experienced in attendance trends and participation in activities? Are there other congregations or faith communities working in this neighborhood or segment of the community; especially groups that may not have a building? Do you have plans to launch new programs to address some of the unmet needs in this community?

45. The Rabbi at the nearest Jewish synagogue. Because Adventists are Sabbath-keepers, follow “kosher” dietary guidelines, and have a deep respect for the Old Testament, there are particular reasons why an Adventist church should open lines of communication with Jewish leaders in the community. In this interview both the basic set of questions and the questions suggested for interviewing the pastor of the nearest church can be used, and there are some specific additional questions that should be included: Are there specific problems that Sabbath-keepers face in this community? Have there been instances of anti-Semitism in recent years in this community? What activities or groups exist that provide for Jewish-Christian dialog and cooperation in this community or region?

46. Key leader in the dominate faith in this county. The religious profile of your community will enable you to identify the largest religion in your county. It would be good to interview some key leader from within that faith group. In approaching this type of interview, you may find some reluctance to speak with a representative of the Adventist Church. You may have to deal with some issues related to their perception—probably somewhat inaccurate—of the Adventist Church in order to get them to agree to an appointment. Once you get into the interview itself, you should use the basic set of questions and the following specific questions: How does your faith community view its dominate role in our county? Is your faith as strong in this specific community as it is throughout the rest of the county? What trends in attendance and membership has your faith community experienced in this area in recent years? What are some of the unmet needs that you feel faith-based organizations should be addressing in this community?

Who in the religious community is doing creative ministry in this area?

47. Temperance organizations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has historically been involved in efforts against alcohol and drug use. Adventists have been active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and similar organizations where they exist. If there is an existing organization of this kind in your area, it would be good to make contact with one of the leaders and find out what they are doing. Use the basic interview questions and these additional, specific questions: What are the particular issues that your organization is dealing with right now? Are there specific, local issues and needs that should be addressed? What territory does your local group cover in terms of geography? How often does it meet? Is there anyone in the group from the Adventist Church?

48. Religious liberty group. Adventists have played key roles in various groups which promote religious liberty over the years. There may be a local or regional chapter of Americans United, or the Church-State Council in your area. If so, it would be important to interview a leader from this organization. In this interview, you can use the core set of questions and you will also want to use these additional items: Are there pressing religious liberty issues right at the moment? If so, what are those issues and how do they impact this community? How wide a territory is covered by your group? Is it a local chapter or state-wide unit? How often does the group meet and is there anyone who meets regularly with the group from the Adventist Church?

Handout 3

Telephone Call to Set Up an Interview

I am calling on behalf of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church has set up a community action team that is trying to understand the realities and needs in our community. One of our first goals is to interview a number of community leaders to get their views and suggestions.

You have been suggested as an important source of information about this community. I would like to arrange a time to interview you within the next two weeks.

Through these interviews we hope to learn from community leaders what role our congregation can play to improve the community. I would be happy to send you the interview questions and arrange a time to meet with you to complete the interview.

Note: You may want to use the name of your community service organization, Adventist Community Services, for example; or whatever your local ministry is called.

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HANDOUT

**U.Y.C. Part
Four: In-
terviewing
Community
Leaders**

Handout 4

Example of a Community Forum

Sabbath, March 5

- 9:30 a.m. Adult Sabbath School
Bible Study—Matthew 25:31-46, Ivan Bell
Panel Discussion—“The Homeless in Phoenix”
Dr. Louisa Stark, Community Mental Health Center
Warren Rogers, American Red Cross
Patti Smith, Adventist Community Services
- 10:50 a.m. Personal Ministries Time
ADRA Video—“Helping the Homeless”
- 11:00 a.m. Divine Worship
Sermon on Luke 10:25-37, Pastor James Edgecombe
- 12:30 p.m. Potluck
- 2:00 p.m. Bible Study—Luke 4:18-19, James Oines
- 2:15 p.m. Symposium—“Poverty in Phoenix”
Lucy Connors, NAACP
Vermel Coleman, Urban League
Eddie Valdez, Mexican American Community Council
Wanda Alberts, Ecumenical Refugee Ministry
- 3:30 p.m. Discussion Groups

Sunday, March 6

- 9:30 a.m. Bagels and Juice
- 9:45 a.m. Bible Study—Isaiah 58, Dr. Charles Teel
- 10:30 a.m. Reports from Discussion Groups
- 11:15 a.m. Organization of Steering Committee for
ADRA Inner City Project

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