

A while ago, I read the book "True Wealth" by Juliet Shor. In the book, Ms. Shor refers to a "plenitude" economy in which people work fewer, but more productive, hours, engage in a "low[er] cost, low-impact, high satisfaction consumer life," and participate in opportunities to revitalize community and social connections. It seems she is describing what has been found in abundance, historically, in rural communities. Unfortunately, this fully-engaging and engaged life of sustainability built on social connection and a well-knit fabric of community has been depleted by the challenges of our times – commutes to



jobs farther away, stagnation and, in some instances, reduction of real wages for a good portion of working people, and the depreciation or under-appreciation of the farmer, coupled with an over- appreciation of the distant corporate processor, wholesaler, and distributor of food.

If Ms. Shor's solution to societal woes here in the United States are those we have known for some time in rural Missouri—connections to land, connections between people, and production over consumption, then what do we do? What can we



*From the desk of Chris Thompson
President and CEO*

do to facilitate that return to the more idyllic life we have known here in West Central Missouri? How do we support the small, family owned businesses that have served as the solid foundation of our

local, rural economies, and encourage the growth of new small businesses? How do we support farmers in our region and encourage the next generation of producers?

Our land and natural resources; our good people – we have an abundance of these in our region. How do we bind these together; how do we connect our people



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President and CEO
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and our resources in ways that meet our current challenges and create the path to "true wealth" benefitting all residents of our West Central Missouri region?

That is the question.

So, let's talk. Better yet, let's act.

Year in Review

Take a moment to look at SOME of the places West Central has been this year! Of course we did a whole lot more than what's here, but we wouldn't have the room to document everything in this newsletter. It's very humbling to think about all of the individuals and families whose lives have been changed by what we do here at West Central.



Thank you for an amazing year!

January

In January, Jamie Oberly took over as Director of Community Services, coats were donated at

Stockton Head Start, Central Office hosted a self-defense training course, West Central attended the Community Action Management & Leadership Conference in New Orleans, we received our first \$2,000.00 seed money from Walmart for our Food Systems Community Garden and Senior Staff went on a very unique team building retreat.



February rolled around, and the groundhog did not see his shadow; meaning an early Spring!

Stockton Head Start collected



books for bookshelves, for every child, Community Services facilitated a REALL Simulation at Appleton City HS, we became the recipients of the Well-Care Micro grant for Transition Services, and Head Start presented a wonderful Tues-



the Capital, Community Services hosted a REALL Simulation at Northeast Vernon County School and we attended the NCAF Conference in



Washington DC. **April** brought back the sunshine and lots of activities! Harrisonville Head Start received a tree donation just in time to do an Arbor Day planting. We attended the Cass and Bates County job fairs, the Nevada Health Fair and Health Awareness Day; we hosted a REALL simulation at Butler HS and U.S. State Representative Vicky Hartzler came to visit our agency to learn more about community action.



In **May**, West Central became the recipient of the Stamp Out Hunger



Food Drive in Belton, Health Services received an amazing donation



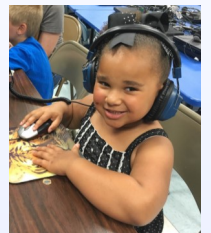
day talk at Central Office!

In **March** we attended the Clinton Career Fair, and Community Action Advocacy Day at



from Golden Living Community, we walked at lunch one

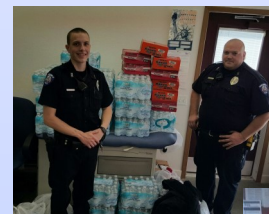
day to promote healthy activities, the Rich Hill Head Start took a field trip to the public school and we found



out communication was our "One Big Thing" at the All Agency Staff Meeting.

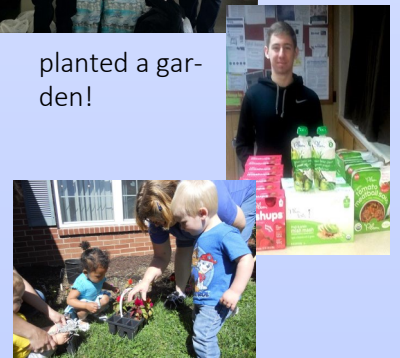


We were busy in the community sharing our story, we received very generous donations from across our



region and the Harrisonville Head Start kids

planted a garden!



(WHEW! And we're not even half-way done!)

Year in Review



gardening classes in Appleton City, while the children in Versailles learned the value of fresh foods and how to plant

In **June** when our Community Garden was in bloom, Food Systems offered



their own seeds. West Central Staff attended the



statewide Missouri CAN conference in St. Louis and showed everyone there what it means when the (Beverly) Hillbillies come to town! West Central won the skit competition and raised \$840.00 for our friends at Hickory County C.A.R.E.S. We also celebrated our wonderful volunteers at a luncheon in Appleton City.



July was a month of celebrations which included the 51st Birthday of West

Central and the opening of the new "Family Health Clinic of West Central" in



our Back To School Fairs and that keeps Community Services hopping! Belton



learned what police do and even got to look inside a real police car! Two young online enthusiasts and bloggers, made a very generous donation to our In-Home Services program. We facilitated a Poverty Simulation in Belton, and Clinton Community Services offered Photovoice for the first time.



certainly not least, West Central had TEN (10) staff members gain FDC credentials this month! In **September**, we



Belton. **August** was a very busy month everywhere! This is the month we do

Head Start kids had a wonderful visit from the Belton Police Department. They

attended the Community Farm Open House and even got to taste some of the harvest. It was delicious! We were able to weatherize



more homes this month and our first (ever) CYBER SENIORS Class was held in Stockton.



The kids and adults were pretty amazing! Head Start had their center Open Houses welcoming the new families back to school. Some very generous donations came in this month from the Belton

Lion's Club and Schreiber Foods in Clinton. **October** came and brought with it several REALL Simulations at El Dorado Springs HS.



An Eagle Scout from Clinton graciously made and installed "Lending Libraries" in the community including one at Antioch Hills. This is a place where community children can go to "check out" a book any time they like!



Year in Review

Head Start showed their support for domestic violence victims on #Purple Thursday and then, at the end of the

month, we had the cutest little visitors come see us at Central Office! **November** came and everyone started getting into the holiday spirit. Our Missouri CAN Chapter

created a West Central Cookbook and due to other fundraising success, they were able to add needy holiday gift recipients in our community. Health Services



administered flu shots to any staff members who wanted one and we partnered with the Salvation Army on Giving Tuesday to ring the bells in Harrisonville and Clinton.

We may have started to wind things down in **December**, but by no means were we done! The Family Clinic of West Central held their Holiday Open House, we had



staff members continuously working to enhance their skills and leadership qualifications and...



Don't forget those UGLY SWEATERS at the Employee Appreciation Luncheon! It was AWESOME!!



And...we will never forget the employees who have selflessly served this agency, some for 45 years!

This year has been humbling because of WHERE YOU TOOK US...and because of all that YOU do!



10 New Year's Resolutions to Make You a Better Communicator

It doesn't matter who you are, where you work, what your goals are or what you've done up to this point. Universally, you have an inherent advantage if you are a better communicator: On a team, you'll have fewer miscommunications and stronger influence. As an employee,

you'll carry more influence and respect from

your bosses and supervisors.

As we begin 2017, I encourage you to make 10 new year's resolutions for yourself, all of which can make you a better communicator:

1. Adopt a few new mediums.

When someone says "communicate," what do you think of? Speaking? Calling? Texting? Skyping? FaceTiming? Facebooking? The options for communication are practically limitless, and every platform has its own ad-

vantages and disadvantages. In 2017, try to break out of your shell; adopt a handful of new mediums that you've never tried or that you gave up some time ago. Become better acquainted with the protocols, strengths and weaknesses of each.

2. Meet more strangers.

If you only talk to the same people over and over, you'll never develop as a communicator. Make it a point to talk to more people you've never spoken to before. They could be new people at networking events or strangers on the street -- it doesn't matter. Strike up a basic conversation with small talk and see where it leads.

3. Ask more questions.

Asking questions does two things: It forces you to think through the conversation at hand, making you more invested; and it gives your conversation partner more

opportunities to give you information. You'll walk away in a better position and with more information -- what more could you ask for?

4. Strive for specificity.

In every conversation -- in person, online, or some other context -- look for more opportuni-

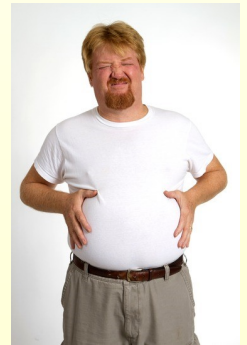
ties to be specific. Do you reference "a project"? What project would that be? Are you "too busy"? Too busy with what? Specificity gives you more credibility and also forces you to think through your statements carefully.

5. Trim the fat.

All of us are guilty of bloated communication at one point or another. Filler words in conversation, like "um" or "uh," take more of everyone's time. Expanded requests like, "It would be nice if you could do this for me" instead of "please do this for me," dilute your meaning. Strive for simpler, more concise forms of communication in every medium.

6. Address your main point earlier.

When you write an email or long text message, how long does it take you to get to your main point? Chances are, it's some-

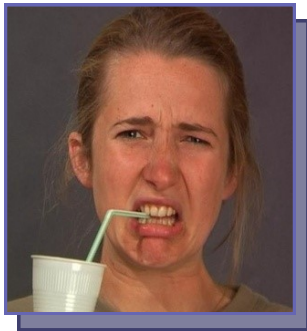


10 New Year's Resolutions...cont'd.

where in the middle of your draft. Strive to include your main point as early as possible to capture your reader's attention. The same can be true for vocal conversations as well -- take your intentions clear from the beginning. It saves a lot of time.

7. Practice better body language.

Body language isn't important for online interactions, but in person it's even more important than the vocabulary you use. Practice better body lan-



guage in front of a mirror or with a family member, and introduce it into real situations. Keep a straight,

upright posture, breathe deep, look your listener in the eye and remain in an open, inviting position.

8. Prepare for more interchanges.

How often do you "wing it" on a client call or show up to a presentation planning to improvise? It's possible to over-prepare, of course, but for the most part, preparation is always a good thing. Think about your words, the order of your speech and possible rebuttals that could come up before any interchange. You'll



be glad you did -- on more than one occasion.

9. Practice humility in every conversation.

You don't know everything. You aren't good at everything. There's a lot of world out there you have-



n't discovered, and a lot of details you're missing

even in your own area of expertise. It's good to be confident in your opinions in conversations, but don't neglect the practice of humility. Admit when you don't know something. Embrace dissenting opinions. You'll be seen as wiser and more approachable, and you'll stand to learn more, as well.

10. Talk less and listen more.

This is key. The more you listen to other people, the more information you'll have, the wider and more sympathetic your vocabulary will become and the more perspectives you'll be able to incorporate into your life. The less time you spend talking, the more time you can spend listening, and listening is only going to help you. Listen to your bosses, mentors, teammates, employees, relatives and even perfect strangers. Everyone has something to teach

you.

As with all new year's resolutions, there's one caveat to ensuring you get the benefits from these practices: You have to remain committed to them. Doing them once or twice in January isn't going to cut it; you need to practice them, daily if possible, and for months, before you start to reap the real results. Communication, like any other skill, demands prioritization and repetition to improve. Make this the month you get started.

Source: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/254546>

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