



CENTER FOR HOUSTON'S FUTURE

FUTURE FOCUS

A Letter from Our President: *Widen the Circle and Deepen the Bench*

March begins my sixth month as President of the Center for Houston's Future, and in this, my first column, I would like to focus on our Business/Civic Leadership Forum. It is one of the Center's premier programs designed to prepare our region's human capital to lead us through the 21st Century.



Now in its 10th year, the Leadership Forum has graduated almost 500 men and women, 35% of whom are Hispanic, African-American or Asian, and 30% of whom are women. Our Forums bring together proven leaders to learn how they can add value to our region, while being given an opportunity to drill down and investigate some of the challenges that it faces. Graduates are inspired to take their own 'learning journeys', find their personal passion and to become more involved.

Our Graduates are making a difference. Let me mention just a few. Beth Wolff chairs the Partnership's Opportunity Houston Steering Committee. Ric Campo has led Camden Property Trust to be named by *Fortune* magazine as one of the 100 Best Companies for which to work in the nation. Irma Diaz-Gonzalez established a volunteer program that has helped more than 4,000 legal immigrants from our area to gain full citizenship.

I am grateful that these people, and so many of you, have taken the mantle of regional leadership seriously, and are working to make a positive difference. Each of us has a role to play in making our region one of the top ten global communities in which to live and work.

Ten Years and Counting: Business/Civic Leadership Forums

Education. Transportation. Urban sprawl. Access to medical services. Capital allocation.

Picture 30 business and civic professionals spending a sunny weekend in a conference room to discuss these heady issues. What are they – nuts? They could be outside playing with their children, running errands or preparing for a dinner party with friends.

The people in this scene concluded that time spent at the Center for Houston's Future Business/Civic Leadership Forum was exactly what they wanted to do. They are eager to learn about this place they call home.

Because of their commitment and experience in the business and volunteer community, they have earned the right to be named among the dedicated group of Center Grads, almost 500 strong, who preceded them. They are part of a long line of individuals who have been groomed to play a critical leadership role in the future of the Houston region.

It is generally recognized that the Houston region is facing significant challenges as it moves into the 21st Century. These challenges include issues of human capital, natural assets and technology. However, there are some unanswered questions including: What will the jobs of the 21st Century require? Are we educating all of our children to make them ready for the future? Will Houston be ready for the next

technological wave? Are the necessary elements in place for the Houston region to be a major player in the global economy? Will we maximize our region's natural assets and create an ambience that attracts the best and brightest to live and work here?



Spring 2009 Forum Participants – from left, Richard Gianni, Reid Wilson, and Marsha Williams

These questions don't have a single answer, and the answers won't come easily. The important thing is to engage people at the juncture of thinking about difficult questions and devising solutions. It is here that the Business/Civic Leadership Forum and the Center for Houston's Future play a tremendously important role.

The Center is where leaders have their skills honed and go on Learning Journeys to explore critical issues. Most don't stop with the Learning Journey in the Forum. They continue to investigate and explore until the solutions become apparent. Some of those stories are told in this issue of Future Focus. ■

Wireless Everywhere

By Umesh Verma, 2004 Forum Graduate & Board Member



This is an exciting time for the greater Houston region. What started out as a Learning Journey for the Spring 2004 Business/Civic Leadership Forum, has grown into full-fledged technology initiative for the region.

After completing the class, I met with several Information Technology (IT) and business leaders in an effort to understand which IT initiatives could advance business and enhance the lives of citizens in the Houston region. While there were several initiatives underway, it became apparent that there was no cohesive strategy between Houston, Harris County and surrounding counties.

Shortly thereafter, I was appointed Chairman of the Technology Infrastructure Task Force (TITF) for the Greater Houston Partnership. During the following nine months, in the true spirit of “coopetition” (cooperate in the morning and compete in the afternoon), senior executives from virtually every type of industry in the Houston area came together to provide critical thinking skills and passion while discussing our region’s needs for future success.

“Without dreams, there are no goals.
Without goals, there is no innovation.”

Umesh Verma

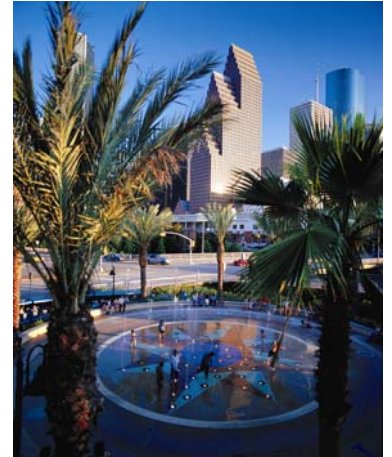
First, the Task Force articulated its vision for technology in the City – *‘A technologically advanced, dynamic region that provides the infrastructure for deploying and integrating products and services that produce life enhancing experiences for the general population and, as a result, will keep the greater Houston region attractive to future generations while driving and sustaining economic prosperity in the region.’*

Next, we embarked on a Center For Houston’s Future style “learning journey”. We realized that we must make our region attractive to our own kids or there would be no chance to attract world class talent from other parts of the country or from across the globe. Since Houston doesn’t make the top 20 U.S. cities in wireless and broadband surveys, our region could benefit immensely from a robust, secure and reliable wireless and broadband infrastructure.

In 2005, Mayor White endorsed our findings and in 2007, the City of Houston awarded EarthLink the contract to put

together a 630 sq. mile Wi-Fi network covering Houston. Unfortunately, EarthLink’s dial-up business was stumbling faster than its Wi-Fi business was taking off. That same year, EarthLink paid the City a \$5 million penalty for missing its deadline to build the municipal Wi-Fi network.

The City is using the settlement funds to assemble and provide free, wireless Internet access to a combined population of more than 350,000 in twenty-five underserved neighborhoods, including Denver Harbor, the Eastex/Jensen Area, Greater Third Ward, Fifth Ward, as well as several community based organizations. At the same time, the City provided free, wireless Internet service across the central business district by making excess bandwidth available for public use. This incremental approach will serve as the model to expand the Internet into other areas of the city.



Technology does not drive change, it enables change. It helps us to keep our appointments; to move needed goods from our ports and rail cars to our homes; to save lives, and, to protect our environment. It controls the flow of traffic and allows us to reach down the block or around the world. Through it we can also benefit from other cultures. Every society and industry benefits from technological advancements. Building a secure, reliable infrastructure breeds confidence and will attract investment. Companies and organizations will feel confident about investing in our region. As a result, we will create jobs and secure economic prosperity for generations to come.

“Technology does not drive change, it enables change.”

Umesh Verma

The Center for Houston’s Future Leadership Forum was the catalyst in getting me involved in the community. It also gave me valuable access to other senior business and community leaders. These relationships have contributed directly to building support for the Wireless Internet. Like dredging the Ship Channel and building the Port was key to 20th century regional growth, building a secure and reliable technology infrastructure is an essential 21st century tool that will make our region one of the top ten global areas in which to live and work. ■

Social and Emotional Learning: Fundamental to the Region's Future

By Jessica Pugil, 2002 Forum Graduate

During Spring 2002, I attended the Center for Houston's Future Business/Civic Leadership Forum. My colleagues and I searched for 'maximum points of leverage' to make Houston's future bright for future generations. Gene Vaughan, Founding Director of Center for Houston's Future, likened the 'point of maximum leverage' to the tiller on the rudder of a ship; one turn of the small but controlling tiller would move the enormous rudder and change the direction of the entire ship.

Few in Houston would dispute that education is one big ship that desperately needs to change direction. CHILDREN AT RISK, a nonprofit organization that focuses on the well-being of children, calculated that the graduation rate for HISD's class of 2004-2005 was just 50.1%. Students in Texas are leaving schools unprepared for the work and society that await them. I want to engage my fellow graduates in taking the work of *Preschool for All*, the Center's first strategic initiative in education, to the next level. We need to advocate for teaching '21st Century survival skills' or 'social and emotional' skills to students, especially those in middle and high school.



The Center undertook *Preschool for All* with the goal of developing sound policy proposals and influencing decisions. Through the Center's efforts, *Preschool for All* involved more than 100 community members who wanted to expand quality pre-school programs to all 3- and 4-year old children in the greater Houston area.

The Collaborative for Children, another nonprofit organization that works to improve the quality of early care and education, partnered with the Center on *Preschool for All* and now owns the results of the project. The Collaborative for Children carries on the initiative both on the ground, by increasing quality programs, and at the Legislature, where it lobbies for increased funding and access to quality programs.

The *Preschool for All* movement recognized that the cultivation of 'social and emotional' skills must start early, if youth are to develop their full potential. Houston's business leaders are a part of this group and are acutely aware of how economic potential is driven by innovation and knowledge.

Today's workplaces are characterized by intense competition and constant change. Jobs and communities are increasingly 'wired' and diverse, which calls for a higher level of communication skills, collaborative relationships and social networking. To work and live successfully in our economy requires more than being able to read and write, do math and understand science. Tony Wagner in his latest book entitled *The Global Achievement Gap* says that "the skills students need to be successful today include critical thinking and problem solving; adaptability; initiative and entrepreneurship; accessing and analyzing information; and curiosity and imagination."

While many would agree with this assessment and despite considerable effort to make changes in education, there has been no significant change in *how* or *what* students are learning. Increased emphasis on 'high stakes tests' has resulted in schools focusing on content rather than skills. Use of technology in student work is still relatively limited and a recent national and statewide emphasis on 'academic rigor' has squeezed out any school time to develop and practice the important social and learning skills.

"Poor kids become poor adults because they never acquire at home or at school the abilities and resources needed to compete in a high tech economy."

James Heckman

According to Economist James Heckman, given our existing educational system and the stresses within families and communities, "poor kids become poor adults because they never acquire at home or at school the abilities and resources needed to compete in a high tech economy." If Houston's students are to have a chance at successful work and life after high school, if our businesses are to be competitive in the global economy, and if Houston's future is to be brighter than it is today, it is imperative to implement an education agenda, and support ancillary educational and after school programs, that infuse the social, learning, and thinking skills that students need to be successful. ■

**Jessica Pugil is currently working on an education project in New Orleans through her independent consultancy, the Working Partner.*

Annual Luncheon

Honoring **Ned S. Holmes**

Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell, Keynote Speaker

April 14, 2009

11:30 a.m., Hyatt Regency Hotel

For tickets, or to reserve a table, [click here](#) or email Jaymie at jpedigo@centerforhoustonfuture.org.

Scenario Planning Project Launched

Our Scenario Planning Project is now in full throttle! Dr. Barbara Heinzen, a world-renowned consultant, visited this month to lead us in the initial steps of the project. Interviews with members of our Board are now complete and we are compiling valuable feedback. Next we will be interviewing a broad cross-section of people throughout the region.

The Center for Houston's Future Scenario Planning Project is a 2-year project that will result in several scenarios, or "pictures of the future", covering the period from 2015 to 2035. The process will explore the impact of global forces on the greater Houston region to determine how they affect its policy choices today. ■

Task Force on Electric Reliability

The Mayor's Task Force on Electric Reliability, chaired by Center Grad **Paul Hobby**, convened a public hearing on February 2, which was jointly sponsored by the Mayor's Office, the Center for Houston's Future and Blueprint Houston. The Task Force grew out of concern for the area's electrical grid following Hurricane Ike, when approximately 93% of CenterPoint's service area lost power. The mission of the Task Force is to recommend practical steps to improve electric reliability in Houston. A report should be released in early April. ■

Leadership Forum Heads Off to a Great Start

The kick-off to our 10th Anniversary Leadership Forum took place at Rice University on February 18, and featured Center for Houston's Future Board Member and Rice University Professor **Stephen Klineberg**, who gave an overview of the implications of his 27 year study of the Houston region.

Session I of the Forum was held from February 20-28 in Sugar Land. Session II will follow from April 16-17 in South Shore Harbor.

Leadership Forums are the premier opportunity to groom your key employees for greater effectiveness in their professions and in the community. To nominate someone for the Fall Forum beginning in October, please click [here](#) or contact cbilton@centerforhoustonfuture.org. ■

Traffic – Livability - Regional Growth

These were the topics covered during the Jan. 29 PBS live televised broadcast of our public forum **Houston Have Your Say**. Among the 40 participants in the studio were Harris Cty. Judge Ed Emmett, Board



Members **Jim Dannenbaum**, **Nelda Blair**, **Stephen Klineberg**, **Eugene Vaughan**, and Metro CEO and Center Grad **Frank Wilson**. Conducted jointly by the Center for Houston's Future, PBS and Houston Community Newspapers, the hour-long show gave the general public an opportunity to call in and voice their opinions on these critical issues. *The next **Houston Have Your Say** will be on May 7, at 7:00pm on Channel 8/HoustonPBS, and will be on the Economy.* ■

Second Environment Regional Indicator Report

The Center will publish "Counting on Quality of Life - 2009," its ground-breaking Environment Indicator Report, for the second time this November. This edition takes an in depth look at air quality, trees, parks and trails. Data requests have been made in Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties in an effort to paint a broader regional picture of the environment beyond Harris County. The Indicator Report is an ongoing collaboration with the City of Houston, Harris County, several nonprofit organizations, and now Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties. New counties will be added each year. ■

NonProfit Leadership Collaborative

May 1, 2009, 8:00a.m-11:30a.m.

**Getting Unstuck:
Shifting Gears When It's Time to Change**
Dan Heath, Author

Junior League of Houston,
1811 Briar Oaks Lane, Houston, TX 77027
Registration is \$25 and will be available as of April 1 at
www.centerforhoustonfuture.org.

We could not make it without your help! Our deepest appreciation to the following Donors and Friends, who supported us this first quarter of 2009:

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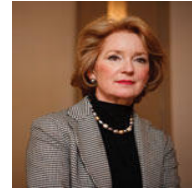
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Friends of the Future are concerned and engaged individuals who want to impact quality of life, public policy and regional collaboration for our area. To become a Friend of the Future, please visit www.centerforhoustonfuture.org. We appreciate your friendship!

N.B. – Our Annual Luncheon Sponsors and Underwriters will be recognized in our next newsletter. Thank you for your support!

Congratulations to:

Grads Linda Addison, Marcia Backus, Ann Lents, and Janiece Longoria, for their pivotal work in conceiving and making the Univ. of Texas Center for Women in Law a reality.



Grad Rebecca McDonald for joining Laurus Energy as their CEO.

Grad H. Thomas Kornegay, on retiring from his post as Executive Director of the Port of Houston Authority.

Gene Vaughan, our founder, for being the recipient of last month's Jefferson Award in Volunteerism. The award is the local equivalent of the Nobel Prize for public and community service.



Graduate Betty Massey for her work in the long-term recovery of Galveston County following the devastation caused by Hurricane Ike.

Center Board Member Juanita Romans, for being appointed as one of four regional leaders within the Memorial Healthcare System, as it restructures operations within its management system.



Grad Ric Campo, for having his company named one of the 100 Best Places to Work For in America. (Fortune, 2009)

Soon-to-be Center Grad Ed Wolff, for receiving the John E. Wolf Citizenship Award, which is given to realtors who give back to their community. Recipients are chosen for their leadership and service to charities and special service organizations.

Graduate Paul Hobby, for being appointed Deputy Chairman to the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

Grad Hank Rush, for being named President and CEO of the nonprofit organization Star of Hope.

Grad Elsie Huang, as she completes her term as President of the Asian Chamber of Commerce.

