

**“Civic Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation and the League of  
Woman Voters of Orange County”**

**2010 Annual Meeting  
League of Woman Voters of Orange County  
April 29, 2010  
University Club of Winter Park  
Winter Park, Florida**

Good evening everyone and thank you Charlie for that charming and short introduction. A good rule of thumb is that the introduction should be more concise than the presentation!

On behalf of Jerry Hilbrich, Chairman of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation, the entire Board of Directors and staff, both past and present, I am delighted to be here tonight. For almost 37 years the Foundation, through its grantmaking and other activity, has been seeking innovative civic solutions that help people help themselves. My time with you tonight is one of the best examples of the Foundation’s philanthropy beyond check writing.

As a member of the University Club of Winter Park, you could not have selected a better location for your meeting, because for over 75 years this place has been an association of knowledge and understanding – a center for civic life. The League is a like-kind organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Congratulations to the National League of Woman Voters on its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday across the United States and upon your 71 years of service and leadership to Winter Park, Orlando, Orange County and ultimately to the people of the state of Florida.

Apart from the ballot box, philanthropy represents the single most direct action an individual can undertake to express their hope for a better community. Let me re-emphasize that important point; apart from the ballot box, philanthropy represents the single most direct action an individual can undertake to express their hope for a better community. To put it another way, without the informed and active participation of citizens in government; without a citizenry conversant regarding major public policy issues; without the education and advocacy to influence public policy to shape our communities for the common good, there just is no need for philanthropy – like seeds upon stony ground, without the nourishment of knowledge and

understanding of practicing democracy, philanthropy cannot flourish, inspire and ignite the dreams of a better future.

Tonight I hope to share with you an assessment of the challenging times we are facing and how "smart communities" not silver bullets is the answer. I want to introduce Stephen Goldsmith's work on the need for civic entrepreneurs and social innovation; and finally I want to endorse Goldsmith's "Twelve Steps to Community Solutions."

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us." I am not speaking about the 1800's; I am talking about what is going on in Washington, Tallahassee and Orange County. By almost every conceivable measure, we the people are less positive and more critical of government. We are fed up with the economic morass, the thievery on Wall Street, the failure to govern by our legislative bodies and by our locally based community organizations. We face domestic and international challenges to our health, our education, our economy and our environment. We want "pills and bills" to cure our ills, we want to "Race to the Top" educationally, we want a "silver bullet" economically and we pray for alchemy to answer our environmental prayers. It might seem to be the season of darkness, but it can be the season of light and enlightenment. As the League of Woman Voters, you know that if we want to make progress on matters of transportation, natural resources, education, local government, social policy, juvenile justice, fair districts, civics, election law reform and voter services that the League and other civic entrepreneurs need to shine the light upon and ignite community networks for good. The problems we face today we cannot fix on our own. There is no quick fix, no microwave solution to our complex problems. As Susan Morse says in her book *Smart Communities*, we need to: invest right the first time; work together; build on community strengths; practice democracy; preserve the past; grow our own leaders; and invite a brighter future. What we need is to join with other civic entrepreneurs to create the social innovation we desperately need.

I cannot do justice, tonight, to the life long work of Stephen Goldsmith, the former Mayor of Indianapolis, special advisor to President George W. Bush for faith-based and nonprofit initiatives, and serving both Presidents Bush and Obama as chair of the Corporation for National and Community Service – so the Foundation has provided you a copy of his new book *The Power of Social Innovation*. In his book he talks about creating social innovation by unleashing civic entrepreneurs. Civic entrepreneurs are those unique people who are capable of building productive, resilient relationships across all three sectors, while helping to organize and develop the economic assets of a community to achieve a better result. You know who these people are because you are civic entrepreneurs as members of the League of Women Voters. You and others like you possess a spirit of enterprise along with a sprit of community – a blending of entrepreneurship and civic virtue! Civic entrepreneurs know that incumbent interests have their protectors, with government bureaucrats, politicians, agency heads; with private funders who easily take the credit, but never the blame; and with business people who want nonprofits to run like a business – except there might just be a reason why they are called non-profit! Civic entrepreneurs find the complex challenge of social service, education, health care or the arts to be an opportunity to find and create public value – driven by data - not just public activity and sentimentality. Civic entrepreneurs know that they can catalyze change by employing one or more strategies of: focusing on results; activating and engaging citizens; sharing the risks and rewards; and entering into or creating an open source space for innovation.

Civic entrepreneurs create social innovation by finding transformative opportunities that are brought forth with a dramatic idea, critical leadership, data and accountability, to impact large numbers of people! Social innovation has the most impact when small organizations and civic entrepreneurs (the “bees” who are mobile, fast and cross-pollinate) work with big organizations (the “trees” with roots, resilience and size) which can grow ideas to scale. Social Innovation, “bees” and “trees,” can best be illustrated by national organizations such as America’s Promise, Teach for America, YouthBuild, City Year, KaBOOM!, and Civic Ventures.

In a few short minutes you will be breaking into your small discussion groups. Let me share with you Stephen Goldsmith’s twelve steps to community solutions. You may want to incorporate them into your discussion or in your future work here at the League.

## TWELVE STEPS TO COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

1. Respect individuals by insisting on higher expectations and good decisions from them.
2. Reach government and philanthropic agreement about the big vision and the definition of public value.
3. Agree on important outcomes and measure them.
4. Require a "sunset" or automatic review of a quarter of existing social programs each year, forcing organizations to justify their contributions. Repurpose money freed up by disbanding unproductive service providers.
5. Solicit and pay attention to the voices of clients in evaluating the importance of services and the effectiveness of their providers.
6. Create philanthropic and governmental venture capital.
7. Give clients a choice about where they get help.
8. Keep government respectful of civil society and help spark more individual acts of service and philanthropy.
9. Seek out, study and incorporate the best national civic entrepreneurs or their ideas. Use a respected intermediary to accelerate deployment.
10. Create mechanisms that mitigate risk by removing the financial, attitudinal, and behavioral obstacles that prevent the market and its opportunities from working well for marginalized citizens.
11. Offer a dose of competition and transparency through performance funding, creative RFP's, and data accessibility.
12. Support organizations that promise improved performance, civic engagement, and citizen-to-citizen interaction.

These twelve steps can be found on page 210 of Goldsmith's book.

There is a Chinese curse that says, "May you live in interesting times." We certainly live in interesting times. The League of Woman Voters

helps us be a “smart community” and not worship at the altar of “silver bullets”! What we learned from Goldsmith’s book is that your work as civic entrepreneurs can ignite civic progress through social innovation. You are the “bees,” now go out and find the “trees” to grow your ideas to scale, impacting Winter Park, Orlando, Orange County and ultimately to the people of the state of Florida!

Thank you very much for being a delightful audience!