Community Ethics Network
Quarterly Newsletter
November 2020

Message from the REACH Team

Greetings! We are excited to provide you with the inaugural Community Ethics Network newsletter. To us, ethics means communicating about the ways in which we understand the public good, and reflectively approaching how we make decisions, set rules, and share information which benefits our community. In line with our commitment to establishing trust and maintaining transparency, the newsletter will provide organizations in the Community Ethics Network with quarterly updates on the R.E.A.C.H. initiative, and present preliminary findings from our listening sessions with local organizations.

BUILDING THE NETWORK
Organizations are added to the Community Ethics Network

RESOURCE DISSEMINATION
resources are disseminated back into the community

LISTENING SESSIONS
CEN members are invited to participate in confidential listening sessions

DEVELOP RESOURCES
findings are used to develop resources for the classroom and the community

SUMMARIZE FINDINGS
information from the listening sessions is summarized and connected to scholarship on ethics

RE-ENVISIONING ETHICS ACCESS AND COMMUNITY HUMANITIES

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Our work entails a cyclical process in which community organizations within the Community Ethics Network (CEN) provide input on their conceptualization of ethics, organizational strengths, and organizational need. This input is then mapped onto scholarship on ethics and used to develop both educational resources for students at Salisbury University, as well as resources and tools accessible to the community.

Ethics Profile
Heather Mahler
Program Director, Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore

Tell us about your organization and what you do?

Heather Mahler

The Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore (CFES) connects people who care to causes that matter for the common good of the Lower Eastern Shore. We are a 501c3 nonprofit with an inspiring history of fostering charitable endeavors, and have provided $89 million in grants and scholarships to the local community since 1984. As part of our core mission, we assist local nonprofits to learn, grow, and prosper. We work to help charitable partners achieve their missions through both financial support and capacity building programs. In my role as Program Director, I coordinate oversight for our grantmaking, nonprofit training, professional development, networking, and capacity-building resources. I am fortunate to participate in many collaborative work groups such as the SU Community Ethics Network.

What drew you to be a part of the Community Ethics Network?

I was drawn to join the Community Ethics Network because CFES has enjoyed a collaborative relationship with Salisbury University for many decades. At CFES, our vision is to create a community where we can all live, learn, work, create, and prosper.   This is a very divisive time in our nation's history. By providing transparency, shared dialogue, and active listening sessions, the network facilitates a mutual understanding between community leaders, which stimulates collaboration towards identifying and acquiring needed resources for our community.

How does ethics improve your work?

Ethics is very important in my sector. Nonprofits must operate with integrity and leaders should practice proper ethics when making decisions for the greater good of our community. Operating with clear guidelines and consistent leadership provides a strong reputation for nonprofits. Proper ethical behavior by nonprofit leaders also emphasizes our core values. Nonprofit organizations are also relying on grants and donations to provide programs and services. Often these are government grants, which is public funding, and donor dollars and we have to be accountable and transparent on how those funds are being utilized to ensure we are complying with donor intent. Additionally, nonprofit organizations must make sure that they reinvest any revenue into the organization and the public benefit of the organization rather than for the benefit of shareholders, board members or staff.

R.E.A.C.H. PROJECT SNAPSHOT
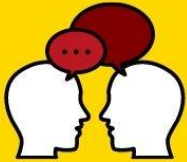
NOVEMBER 2020

44

COMMUNITY ETHICS NETWORK
44 local partners

44 local community organizations have joined the community ethics network. This includes 27 nonprofits, 6 religious or faith-based organizations, 9 City, County, or State organizations or agencies, and 2 for-profit businesses,

LISTENING SESSIONS
3 sessions with 13 participants

We have held 3 listening sessions with representatives from 13 local community organizations. Listening sessions provide an opportunity to discuss ethics in a confidential setting, and share ideas and challenges.

POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS
High ratings in our community

When rating on a 5-point scale, organizations see the value and promote positive aspects of character, such as loyalty, truthfulness and a commitment to justice in their organization (4.5) and when interacting with others (4.6)

NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS
Area for improvement

On the same 5-point scale, representatives felt their local organizations were less effective at discouraging negative aspects of character, such as boredom, antipathy, and helplessness in their organization (3.4) and when interacting with others (3.6).

NEXT STEPS
continued research and planning

Listening sessions will continue throughout the winter and spring. Information received will inform the development of curricular and community resources.

TO LEARN MORE, CONTACT:
DAVID JACKSON AT
DXJACKSON@SALISBURY.EDU

Listening Sessions

We are exited to announce that we are holding listening sessions with representatives from area nonprofits. These listening sessions are an opportunity to hear from community organizations associated with the Community Ethics Network about their experiences, successes, and challenges in serving our local community. Listening sessions also provide an opportunity for organizations in the Community Ethics Network to speak with each other about their experiences.

During a typical listening session, approximately 5 to 10 people from our community engage in a guided discussion on topics such as: the values that guide their work, how decisions are made, barriers they face in serving the community, and perceptions on the most pressing community concerns. The infographic on the left presents some of our preliminary findings.

Findings will be used to further inform and guide our work, both on campus and in the development of resources for organizations in the Community Ethics Network.

Our next round of listening sessions are being scheduled for mid-November. We invite any area organization, including for-profit businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and government agencies and groups, to participate. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to Community Outreach Specialist David Jackson, at dxjackson@salisbury.edu.

Participating in the listening sessions represents a commitment on behalf of your organization to provide information about pressing areas of ethical concern, and will help shape future collaborations between campus and community. We look forward to hearing from you!