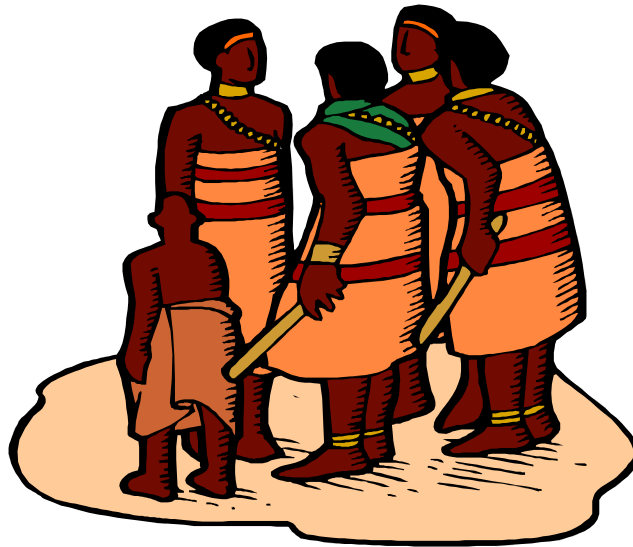


THE VILLAGE GROUP



Strategic Plan

**BRIDGING THE GAP FOR
A BETTER COMMUNITY**

PLANTERSVILLE,
SOUTH CAROLINA

The Village Group is a non profit community organization created to help bridge the gap for a better community. Our five year plan for change would see our community into the twenty first century. This strategic plan is the blueprint for success in the rural Plantersville Community. It took months of hard work and dedication on the part of the individuals throughout the community to formulate the plan. The Village Group stands ready to actualize the many needs within the strategic plan.

In the one year since designation as a 501c3 organization, The Village Group efforts have been toward supporting local projects in the community. With designation as a 501c3, however everything changes the way the organization has to conduct business. We hope to increase our economic strength, literacy, develop new job opportunities, community development, increase quality of life, youth development, improve housing, and many, many other recognized needs, including an overall improvement in the outlook for the future of our community.

We depend heavily on volunteer energy to plan and implement projects. Everything that The Village Group does is guided by a vision of a “better community” for rural Plantersville. We will take a holistic approach to a wide range of possible projects and issues. Many different types of projects can be the means to the desired end.

We have a fertile environment in the rural community of Plantersville. With the collaboration of other existing leaders and organizations, we can work together to resolve complex issues and achieve projects of joint interest.

We are focused on improving the quality of life in rural Plantersville through the formation of collaborative partners to enhance resources available to our community. The Village Group volunteers are drawn from a diverse population of rural Plantersville. A networking and collaborative organization, The Village Group provides a neutral forum which rural initiatives can be successful and traditional policy inequities can be addressed.

FIVE YEAR WORK PLAN

The Village Group five year work plan is an aggressive plan of action for both the leadership and volunteers of the group. The plan is meant to be a dynamic document able to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented to rural Plantersville and the partnership during the five years.

In March 2006, the Village Group initially developed an organization needs assessment entitled “**Bridging the Gap for a Better Community**”. Since that time, we have focused on the implementation of that plan, both through our efforts and through the efforts of our partners. Each year our volunteers and our board of directors will develop a work plan. This plan will address activities that will take place during the year. At implementation of the organization, a rough draft was developed to immediately address the mission of the

group. This rough draft was used in 2006 and has served as a catalyst for bringing change to rural Plantersville.

The following is a summary of those goals and objectives along with desired outcome of each project.

Projects

Improve Communication with Volunteers

Activities:

1. Produce a large amount of newsletters to members in the community and **abroad**. Save costs by utilizing e-mail to deliver the newsletters. A hard copy was sent to volunteers without email or fax access.
2. Kept our membership informed of changes as they occurred in the community. Announcements were made relevant to rural Plantersville and critical changes that took place.
3. As soon as training and funding opportunities are known to the CEO of the organization, volunteers are informed via e-mail, fax and postal service.
4. Quick revenue researches for funding potential for volunteer initiatives.

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We believe that educated and informed individuals are more effective in their capacity as leaders in the rural communities. Broadening and expediting access to information, training, and funding opportunities increased the chances for success of the organization's initiatives

Finance/Revenue

1. Identify potential revenue sources through committee research
2. Identify new initiatives that can generate sponsorship fees
3. Initiate sponsorship drives
4. Explore state and federal funding opportunities
5. Continue efforts for stabilizing funding for the organization.

Secured revolving monetary commitments, this allows for a continuous flow of revenue to sustain group projects. The Village Group will help identify resources through its Board Members, other organizations, and private and non-profit businesses to enhance economic and community development endeavors of rural Plantersville.

Social Services

Activities:

1. Provided financial assistance to disaster victims of the community.
2. Provided bereavement expression of love to families and households in the community
3. Initiated project 'Blanket Plantersville' which consisted of blanket distribution to senior citizens.

4. Provided handicapped assessable equipment to special needs individual.
5. Organized community receptions at the community Center.

Encourage families to care for others (church families, extended families) and neighbors so that the elderly, handicapped, and the less fortunate may have a better quality of life.

Building Partnerships

The major role of this plan is to identify responsible parties in Georgetown County to assist The Village Group in its efforts in developing and enhancing life for the citizens of the rural community of Plantersville.

The group will established and build upon existing dialogue with the various existing organizations, local, state and national leaders. The group will promote the initial dialogue to build collaborative partnerships in reaching goals and objectives. The group expects a cooperative effort from educators, businesses, and government in improving the quality of life for citizens in the community. An established dialogue will prevent duplication of readily available existing community resources.

The group will demonstrate that a small underserved community can become knowledgeable about the importance of combined efforts, that each individual has something to offer, and that improving the quality of life is within the their power.

STRATEGIES

- Promote the welfare of all residents.
- Assist in raising the standard of living in the community
- Form a collaborative effort to rebuild our neighborhoods decaying from poverty and neglect.
- Work with small rural businesses to increase their potential in business development
- Partner with stakeholders to promote business and community development
- Build community partnerships with law enforcement officials to develop local crime and gang prevention strategies.
- Promote the capacity of the volunteer sector through faith based organizations and schools.
- Become active, not only in our neighborhood but in the greater community as a whole.

- Foster cooperation between all partners to better coordinate service delivery for efficiency.
- Promote community school partnership.

Partnerships

The following is a potential partnership list. This list is to be used as a starting point and may be changed to accomplish the desired goals of the group.

Business Leaders

- Major Employers/Industry
- Growing Businesses
- Struggling Businesses
- Retail Businesses
- Chamber of Commerce
- Owners/Operators

Agriculture

- Variety of leaders in local agriculture production

Education

- Local school district
- Speciality Training
- Higher Education
- Workforce Investment Act

Government

- Local Communities
- City and County
- Law Enforcement and Emergency Response Team

Healthcare

- Health and Human Services
- Department of Health and Environmental control
- Georgetown county Diabetic Core Group
- St James Santee Health Clinic
- Mental Health
- Disabilities and Special Needs
- Georgetown and Wacammaw Hospitals

Infrastructure

- Utility providers
- Transportation

Financial Resources

- Banks

Real Estate Agencies

Youth

Senior Citizens

Special Interest Groups

Emergency disaster Preparedness

Churches

College Students

Non –profit organizations

The discussion with potential partners will be designed to make an assessment of the information discussed and provide The Village Group with information about the community from each sector's perspective. The main focus of all discussion will be the issues facing rural Plantersville, specifically as it relates to the community and economic development. The information gathered will assist the Village Group in preparing the findings and recommendations for the community.

Trends in the Community

Prior to collaborating with partners, The Village Group will provide data based on the availability of accurate and current information. This data will serve as a basic starting point to identify challenges that hinder our community to soar to the next level of development.

Background information could include, but is not limited to:

- Most recent census data
- Historical census
- Population data (current historical and projections)
- Department of labor Statistics
- Small Business Administration
- Employment and wage data
- School District enrollment (current, historical, and Projections)
- School district test results
- School District Graduation Rate
- Housing startup/permits
- Sales tax data (historical and current)
- Property tax data (historical and current)
- Recent news clippings
- Department of Agriculture (Clemson Extension)

Again, it will be the responsibility of The Village Group to review the background data prior to collaborating with potential partners. It will be helpful to use the strategic plan to highlight concerns and formulate questions for all discussions. In addition, the leader of the organization should interview the said party to give the partner further insight into the community's culture, challenges, and history. These should be shared with the organization's governing body. Finally, The Village Group have pursued opportunities to

work together, share information, and discuss challenges and concerns faced by each within an environment characterized by openness and collaboration.

Healthcare

Citizens in a healthy community have options in healthcare and can choose from a variety of recreational activities and cultural opportunities. There is a sense of pride in the community. Healthy lifestyles are promoted and encouraged. However, The Village Group would like to broaden the knowledge of those complacent individuals. Rural Plantersville is in need of consistent recreational activities that include all of its citizens. We would like to establish community activities, and provide citizens with information about the importance of healthcare and the impact that it is having on their lives.

The geographical distance between hospitals and providers put many of the citizens of the community at a disadvantage in receiving consistent quality healthcare. Most of the citizens have access to transportation. However traveling to neighboring counties and towns for healthcare can put an economic burden on most families. A vast majority of the citizens in rural Plantersville do not participate in existing healthcare initiatives. Our goal would be to educate rural Plantersville about the importance of preventive care through the resources that are readily available in the county. We will work with the existing healthcare organizations to provide more accessible healthcare services. We will work to ensure that people will get the knowledge needed about various diseases that exist among specific population groups in our community. The Village Group will support rural healthcare providers, practitioners, and students who wish to pursue advance medical training.

Clean water, fresh air, healthy environment, and an attractive landscape are key issues in developing healthy community. The challenge is to make individuals with various diseases fully aware of guidelines and medical action that should be taken about their health condition. The people in rural Plantersville understand the impact that clean water and fresh air has on their health. We will work to ensure that people can build a higher quality of life and that they understand the impact that the trend of existing behaviors have on a healthy life style. Our plan will offer better health policy through a variety of strategies that will ultimately improve the quality of life.

- Encourage healthy lifestyles that prevent illness
- Support alternative energy use to improve air quality in homes and the environment
- Promote education and career development
- Establish opportunities for collaboration and partnership development in healthcare services
- Identify statistics to support health disparities in the community
- Promote sound land use in the community that will maintain health, social well-being and economic growth
- Ensure the safety of our drinking water
- Attract more healthcare professionals to Plantersville
- Partner with existing community health organizations and awareness programs

- Develop strategies for decreasing tobacco and drug use, preventing obesity and increasing physical activity

Success for students

Students in rural Plantersville are entitled to a quality education. When our children have access to a good education in the community school, our rural community grows stronger.

Our goal is to set a foundation for a highly skilled workforce, able to compete in a global economy. This means that The Village Group would like to see the children grow up to contribute to building a strong rural community.

The role of the school in our community is even larger than providing essential education. The heart of the community is often the local school. Our school is where people get together to take part in community activities and stay active and involved. In rural Plantersville, the school is the only public facility large enough to have any type of event.

Rural community schools assist in shaping the community's identity and contribute to a higher quality of life. Most people in rural America associates the school with locating the core of the community.

The school district knows that the rural schools are facing special challenges, including staffing, programming, and parental involvement. However if the people in the community are complacent about the quality of education being provided, then no action will be taken by the elected officials.

We are committed to meeting these challenges successfully. We will ensure that rural students have an equal opportunity for a quality education and that skills training are available to help them develop skill to be self reliant.

Strategies:

- Increase access to schools for community groups
- Make funding for education more responsive to the need of rural Plantersville
- Increase community involvement in rural school
- Develop accessible reading programs for all children

From building homes to cleaning ditches, The Village Group is committed to being involved in the lives of people in rural Plantersville. The various community projects will improve the rural community environment for all residents.

Five year plan includes the following projects:

Seniors on the Move

Responsible Parties: The Village Group, Georgetown County Bureau of Aging Services, Community volunteers. Our goal is to encourage vibrant seniors to share their talents, gifts and wisdom with the community.

Desired outcome: Coordinate volunteers to visit hospitals, convalescence homes, and private homes. Encourage active seniors to work beyond 62 years of age. Allow seniors to mentor the youth in the community by sharing their life's history. The seniors will be allowed to demonstrate the treasured talents such as quilting, knitting, cooking, etc. Hopefully the community can capitalize on the incredible energy and passion that comes from working with the seniors. Indeed, communicating and collaborating talents from seniors will open up a whole new dimension of human experience for the young and the old alike in the community.

Energy Assistance Program

Responsible Parties: The Village Group, Wacammaw Economic Opportunity Council(WEOC), Volunteers

Desired Outcome: Enhance the existing senior program. Provide financial relief with the high cost of utility expenses, assist with prescription cost, and provide education and information about available resources.

Our goal is to provide financial relief with the high cost of gasoline, kerosene and grocery. A large majority of the seniors in rural Plantersville live on a very small fixed income. Transportation services are not available and our community has a large population of seniors that do not drive vehicles. Many household still use wood heaters as a mean to heat their homes. However because they are no longer able to gather firewood, they must pay someone to deliver the firewood. The Village Group can be very instrumental in counseling with the seniors to encourage them to upgrade their heating method to a more modern source of heating. Therefore we would organize committees for each geographical area in the community to mentor a senior.

Food bank

Our goal is to make sure that everyone has an adequate supply of food in their homes. Rural Plantersville has a large population of households that have diabetes and other medical problems. We would ensure that healthy food is available at a reasonable or no cost to the residents in Plantersville. Food assistance would be provided in the most detrimental months (December-February).

Responsible Parties: The Village Group, Local Food banks in Georgetown County and volunteers.

Desired Outcome: Distribute non-perishable food items to seniors, widows, and low income families. Food would be distributed to anyone that is experiencing financial difficulty and is in need of food for their household.

Arts/Education Area

College Boosters

Responsible Parties: The Village Group, Parents, High School and volunteers.

In our community a large population of high school students, do not pursue a college education. Our goal is to promote educational opportunities to our high school graduates in their junior year. We would like to maintain a relationship with students at the onset and during college tenure. Hopefully we will be able to provide financial assistance by increasing the awareness of available scholarships, grants and loans. Assist potential college students, recent graduates and high school drop outs with resume writing and job interviewing skills.

Desired Outcome: Utilize The Village Group email to maintain relationships with students throughout their college life. Gain scholarships to reduce the tuition cost for parents. Provide counseling and mentoring for college students. Allow active college students to share their college experience with first time college students. Assist in preparing students for the workforce.

(3r's) Reading, Rwriting, Rarithmetic

Responsible Parties: the Village Group, local elementary school, local county libraries, and volunteers

Desired Outcome: no child will be left behind. Each child will be able to become a productive citizen in society.

Along with the local community school create a tutorial program for children of all ages. Collaborate with the school to target those children that need assistance with basic reading and writing skills. We will provide assistance to the school and parent with students that are having behavior issues. This will provide reassurance to the teachers that the citizens in rural have a vested interest in the education of our youth.

Revenue

The Village Group has developed a comprehensive plan to increase funding sources spanning over the next five years. Each identified funding source will be researched to determine if funding is available. Revenue is expected to increase each fiscal year over 23% by increasing grant funding, sponsorship, and fundraising events and in kind donations. With each years increase in revenue, the goal of The Village Group is to be able to reach broader demographics through out the county.

Attaining 501c3 status allowed the organization to apply for a wide variety of grants. There are a vast amount of grants that focus their efforts on community outreach and growth. Sixty percent of the revenue generated by the Village Group will be allocated

through grants. Grant funding will be used to implement programs purchase supplies, transportation, and administrative costs.

We intend to actively seek grant funding from local charity. This will increase revenue and provide needed services and supplies to implement programs. The mission of this foundation is to improve the quality of life for Georgetown County citizens by focusing on causes consistent with many foundation's values, with emphasis on: addressing the root causes of poverty, advancing equitable economic growth, environmental conservation, and encouraging positive youth development. These values compliment the village Group's mission statement, (Bridging the Gap for a Better Community).

Another revenue source will be obtained through sponsorship contributions. Currently, The Village Group core group has 30 volunteers. Our goal over the next five years is to increase enrollment by 45%. The Village Group will actively pursue corporate members to increase revenue. We would like to aggressively market the organization's name and goals so that we can increase awareness and sponsorship. Hosting community events, developing a website, distributing literature, and verbal communication are all active ways of increasing awareness.

Conclusion

Over the next five years, The Village Group will generate revenues from local businesses, corporate entities, charity foundations, local churches, community groups and other available sources. All revenue generated will be used to implement programs that have been identified in our strategic plan.