

- The decline in housing values also has led to one-in-five homeowners owing more on their homes than they are worth. This could lead to more homeowners defaulting on their loans, hurting banks and putting more houses on the market.
- The economy sank at an annual rate of -6.1 percent in the first three months of 2009, after plunging -6.3 percent the previous quarter (the worst back-to-back contraction in 50 years).
- The unemployment rate in the U.S. now stands at 8.1%, the highest in 25 years.
- The U.S. government will have to borrow 46 cents for every dollar it spends this year and 35 cents for every dollar it spends next year.

5 key points about how to survive in this economic environment

1. Understanding what is going on in our economy, our nation and the world is a prerequisite to effective action – to thinking and acting strategically, taking advantage of the opportunities in the present environment.
Corollary: Realism is valuable; undue pessimism or optimism can lead us astray.
2. This economic downturn impacts, but does not do away with the fundamental tenets of “the new economy” – globalization, widespread use of technology and seeking the lowest cost labor on the planet.
3. The need to fully utilize broadband and other technologies is even greater, as increased competition favors communities, businesses and organizations that use technology to do things better and do better things.
4. To overcome barriers and move forward, communities, organizations and regions need to create breakthroughs – breakthrough solutions that make a leap forward. (That is the purpose of our Breakthrough Solutions Program).
5. An economic downturn also requires excellent leadership. In a recent interview, Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of Great Britain, stated:

“Leadership in these tough economic times requires a very particular kind of leadership. You have to be honest with people, and give people inspiration and confidence. You have to tell them that these are tough times, but we will come through it, and we will come through it together.”

This is the first in a series on how communities, organizations and individuals can survive and even thrive in this economic environment. Feel free to share with friends.

Amenity-Based Economic Development Study Completed

Two challenges to Arkansas communities and regions are supporting businesses and marketing the assets and opportunities in the region. A useful strategy for this is amenity-based economic development – developing, enhancing, and marketing natural and man-made amenities that attract people to come to visit, play and live.

With funding from the U of A Cooperative Extension Service Public Policy Center and local organizations, Dr. Mark Peterson and Maureen Rose conducted research in the eight-county North Central (NCARED) region in north central Arkansas. This project included a fact-finding meeting in each of the eight counties, with the ultimate goal of developing a regional web portal for marketing the amenity-based businesses and talents of the region to the world.

This study targeted businesses involved in amenity-based economic development: agri-tourism, agri-tainment, artisans, performing artists and tourism. Over half of the participants started their own business. The most pressing challenges they identified were marketing to and finding customers, finding and training qualified employees, financing and delivery of quality products.

Other key findings of the study:

- The participants reflected an awareness of the importance of the Internet, but there is significant opportunity for improvement.



Fulton County focus group at work.

- A significant percentage (87.8%) of the businesses represented have broadband connectivity, a huge improvement compared to a few years ago.
- Cost is a factor in businesses accessing broadband. Of the businesses for whom broadband is available, 28.7% indicated that it is not affordable in their opinion.
- Participants endorsed the idea of a regional brand, choosing “Naturally Ozark” (by 62.8%) over “Authentic Ozark” (24.1%) as a brand for the region.

The NCARED board has since adopted Naturally Ozark as a brand, and a Creative Economy Team is at work, chaired by Rich Fischer. This project is an excellent example of a breakthrough solution, and furthers the Breakthrough Solutions work that has taken place in the NCARED region – the 21st Century Vision initiative. For a copy of the study, contact Mark Peterson at mpeterson@uaex.edu, 501-671-2253.

Breakthrough Solutions Funding Sponsors

Just a note to thank our funding sponsors for their support of the Breakthrough Solutions Conference and Program. We appreciate their investment in the future of Arkansas.

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Columbia County Forward Identifies Top Issues Through Town Halls

“This is the most important initiative in which Arkansas Capital has been involved, with the greatest opportunity to impact Arkansas for years to come,” stated C. Sam Walls, CEO of Arkansas Capital Corporation Group. Walls spoke at a Waldo town hall meeting of Columbia County Forward (CCF), a pilot county of the Connect Arkansas e-Communities initiative. He also expressed his appreciation for the hard work of the CCF Steering Committee. The town meeting in Waldo was the final of five town meetings held throughout the county.

“We had excellent participation at the town meetings, and look forward to tackling these issues in our planning process,” stated Cammie Hambrice, Chairperson of Columbia County Forward and Executive Director of the Magnolia Columbia County Chamber of Commerce. “This is one more step in the process, and our goal is for the whole county to advance through technology.”

Jobs and a strong economy was identified as the highest priority, with broadband availability for everyone in the county as a close second. Education, health care and roads were also identified as priorities. Barriers to full use of technology included finances, lack of awareness and lack of access to broadband or equipment.

Next steps in the e-community process are to interview 30 leaders in the community and survey parents of school kids in the county. The timeline for Columbia County Forward is to complete a technology strategic plan by the end of the summer. Kim Tran, Connect Arkansas Vice President, and yours truly, work as a team to support the Columbia County Forward initiative.

Coming Events

June 2

Arkansas Procurement Opportunities Conference – Connecting Small Business to Large Opportunities, Little Rock. Go to www.arkansasprocurement.org.

June 2-4

2009 Arkansas Rural Development Conference, Hot Springs. Sessions include: Community Development, 87th General Assembly Overview, Rural Fire Departments, Grant Writing, Roads & Transportation, the Arkansas Lottery and Governor Beebe as keynoter. Visit www.arkansas.gov/drs, or call 1-888787-2527.

June 3-5

2009 Arkansas Users of Telecommunications and Information Technology (AUTIS) Conference, Hot Springs. Go to www.autis.org for more information.

June 8-9

Southern Energy – Abundant, Affordable, & American, Southern Growth Policies Board Annual Conference, Biloxi, MS. Go to www.southern.org/forms/conf_rsvp.html.

June 30–July 1

The Role of Extension in Energy, Little Rock. Go to www.farmfoundation.org/web/content/Transition-to-a-Bioeconomy-The-Role-of-Extension-in-Energy-1704.aspx?z=85&a=1704.

July 26-29

Celebrating Community: Creating Hope in Uncertain Times – 41st Annual International Conference of the Community Development Society. For more information, go to <http://comm-dev.org/>, e-mail CDS@assnoffices.com, or call 614-221-1900.

August 3-7

Helping You Put the Pieces Together for a Better Community – 2009 Community Development Institute Central, University of Central Arkansas. For more information, go to www.uca.edu/cdi, call 501-852-2930, or e-mail cdi@uca.edu.

Arkansas C. D. Society Recognizes Award Winners, Elects Officers

On January 1, Cary Tyson, director of the Arkansas Main Street Program, became the new president of the Arkansas Community Development Society. He is joined by these officers: Lyn Haralson, V.P. – Programs; Timothy Lee, V.P. – Technology; Renee Doty, Secretary; Monieca West, Treasurer; Mark Peterson, Past-President; and Basil Julian, Frankie Gilliam, Veronica Post, Regina Walker and Diane Tatum as Regional Directors. Committee chairs include Terre McLendon, Awards; Pat Audirsch, Scholarship; and Basil Julian, Grants.

ACDS award winners:

Innovative Community Development Program

Awards – Crossett Economic Development Foundation – Strong Roots for Growing Crossett, Hope/Hempstead County Connected Communities Program, and Arkansas Department of Higher Education – Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative.

Community Development Achievement Award – Patrick Henry Hays, Mayor, North Little Rock

ACDS Distinguished Service Award – Steve Jones, AR Economic Development Commission.

Congratulations to Cary and his new team, and the award recipients and their fine work.

Connected Communities Chosen for Innovative C.D. Award

Congratulations to Hempstead County Connected Communities for being chosen to receive the Innovative Community Development Program Award for communities between 10,000 and 50,000 population. The Connected Communities Program was funded by a Giving Tree Grant from the Arkansas Community Foundation, by Hope and Hempstead County organizations, and the U of A Cooperative Extension Service. It was developed and implemented by Mark Peterson and Maureen

Rose with the U of A Cooperative Extension Service. The award was presented at the Arkansas Community Development Society (ACDS) Annual Conference last fall at Conway.

The purpose of this award of merit is to provide recognition of successful programs and projects taking place in Arkansas communities, and to promote best practices in community development across the state. Accepting the award was Dave Phillips, Director of Telecommunications at the U of Arkansas Community College at Hope (UACCH).

A few of the accomplishments so far include:

- Building demand for broadband through a series of articles in newspapers, radio stations, and local cable channels on the importance of telecommunications.
- Holding a series of workshops on e-commerce, e-health, e-government, e-tourism and opportunities through geographic information systems.
- Surveying the county to determine the demand for broadband.
- Supporting a rural health group that received a \$20,000 grant to support telemedicine.
- Motivating the I.T. Club at UACCH to develop websites for the Hometown Health Initiative, Hope Hempstead County Connected Communities, and Hempstead County Government.
- Planning for virtual tourism through Historic Washington State Park (requires broadband).
- Putting video clips on YouTube and My Space and web page.
- Installing wireless broadband video cameras in community parks to reduce crime.
- Forming Southwest Arkansas Connected Communities to serve as a vehicle for the development and utilization of broadband in southwest Arkansas.

This provides a valuable example of what can happen when citizens and leaders come together to harness the power of technology in their county.



Celebrating Community: Finding Hope in Uncertain Times

C. D. Society International Conference Set for July 26-29 in Memphis, TN

The headlines can be disheartening, with housing foreclosures, climate change, energy prices, industry downturn and decline, but underneath the headlines are the real stories in the lives of citizens, neighborhoods and communities finding hope in these uncertain times. The Community Development Society invites you to its annual conference, to explore the ways in which communities are responding to the uncertain times. The conference will feature an event at the Civil Rights Museum, excellent speakers and mobile learning workshops. The closing session will feature two top-notch Arkansas leaders: Phil Baldwin, CEO of Southern Bancorp, and Claiborne Deming, former CEO of Murphy Oil. Visit www.comm-dev.org for more information.

Scholarships Now Available for Community Development Society Conference, CDI

“We have three scholarships available, and they are wonderful opportunities for community leaders and community development professionals to gain a greater vision for the future, plus practical strategies to realize those visions,” states Pat Audirsch, Chair of the Arkansas Community Development Society Scholarships Committee. “The scholarships are to attend the Community Development Society International Conference in Memphis from July 26-29, and attend the Community Development Institute at Conway from August 3-7.” To learn more (and how to join the ACDS), go to <http://www.arkansascds.org/index.htm>. **Deadline is May 29.**

Conference Features:

- Civil Rights Museum
- Speakers
- Mobile Learning Workshops

22nd Annual Community Development Institute Set for August 3-7

Community Development Institute Central offers an educational and training experience, coupled with graduate degree credit if desired, in which a person can develop knowledge and skills to facilitate community and economic development. The Institute focuses on building alliances and infrastructures to increase a community's economic and social growth by expanding an individual's ability to identify community and economic problems, set goals, and encourage liaisons with agencies and organizations. The Institute's curriculum is designed to meet the needs of community leaders and community economic development professionals or anyone with an interest in community and economic development. Visit www.uca.edu/cdi.

Funding Available to Strengthen Non-Profits, Faith Based Groups

The Department of Health and Human Services announced the availability of grants worth \$50 million from the Strengthening Communities Fund, a new fund created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Fund awards of up to \$1 million to local governments or non-profit organizations that will use the funds to support faith-based or secular nonprofit organizations that are struggling in the economic downturn. Visit www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/recovery.html for more information.

Economic Stimulus Funding Information Available Online

Funding is beginning to flow to communities and local governments from the federal economic stimulus bill (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). To track federal funds provided through the ARRA, visit www.recovery.gov. To see opportunities with

particular agencies, use the drop-down menu in the center of the page.

Arkansas has a website devoted to Arkansas's Recovery and Reinvestment Act – <http://recovery.arkansas.gov/>. On this website, Governor Beebe states: "Thank you for visiting the Website of Arkansas's Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This Act is a great opportunity for Arkansas, and its implementation will be carried out with transparency, oversight and accountability."

Broadband Grants Available

USDA has made available \$13.4 million to expand broadband service to rural areas. Local and state governments are eligible for grants of \$50,000 to \$1 million and must match 15% of the grant either with cash or in-kind. Grants can be used to construct, acquire or lease broadband transmission services; improve, expand or lease community centers that provide free access to broadband, purchase computer equipment, and provide broadband to critical community facilities and first responders within the proposed service area. Deadline is June 19. Go to <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/comconnect.htm>.

Broadband funding is also available through the U.S. Department of Commerce: http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/program-plan&program_id=5517. Check www.motorola.com/recoveryact as well.

How to Strategically Impact Your Community:

If you want to impact your community in a powerful way, forward this e-mail newsletter to other individuals in your community or organization, so they can benefit from the resources, insights and strategies covered in Breakthrough News.

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Website of the Month

Shock and Awe: This Church Lady Can Sing

Even though some of you have seen this website, it is still AMAZING, and you will want to forward this to all of your friends and relatives. Susan Boyle, a volunteer charity worker who lives alone with her cat in Scotland, walked on to the stage of "Britain's Got Talent" and captured the hearts of everyone in the audience when she performed "I Dreamed a Dream" from the musical "Les Miserables." It is a story about a hard luck woman for whom years of misfortune have stolen her youth and dreams. To see this truly extraordinary performance, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lp0Iwv8QZY>. You can see Susan Boyle in the semi-finals of Britains Got Talent at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmWCqIVQpEI&feature=topvideos.

United Press International reports that the cumulative viewing of videos posted about Boyle on YouTube, MySpace, and other venues has topped 100 million in two weeks, dwarfing attention received by other major online news stories such as President Obama's election victory speech. There are two extraordinary lessons here for us all: 1) Never underestimate the talents and abilities of anyone you encounter and 2) Never

underestimate the power of the internet to share information and news (good and bad). Thanks to C. Sam Walls for bringing this to our attention.

More About Breakthrough Solutions

Recipient of the Outstanding Program Award by the international Community Development Society, Breakthrough Solutions is a program of the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, with partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors. Breakthrough Solutions Program is now available for communities and regions seeking to prosper in the global, knowledge-based economy. For more information about the Breakthrough Solutions Program, go to www.vworks.org, e-mail to vworks@uaex.edu or call (501) 671-2253.

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