



What is the **ECHO Council**? *(recently incorporated as ECHO Network, Inc.)*

“The ECHO Council builds a better community by providing opportunities to foster enriching, trusting, and long-lasting relationships among diverse people.”

The ECHO Council (EC) is a diverse group of approximately 40 community leaders that came together in December 2003 to promote the building of social capital in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. The mission of the EC is to build a better community by providing opportunities to build enriching, trusting, and long-lasting relationships among diverse people. Over the years, the EC has initiated several efforts such as a Volunteer Center, Leadership Summit, and Conversation Groups in an effort to bring people from diverse backgrounds together to build relationships as well as discuss issues that impact the Winston-Salem community.

What does the ECHO Council actually do?

The ECHO Council acts as a force for positive community change by raising critical questions and by bringing people together to develop solutions that serve the interests of all residents.

- The group will serve as a “think tank” generating innovative ideas and continually evaluate existing strategies that advance the ECHO Council’s mission of building trusting relationships across lines of difference.
- Members will engage in a variety of individual, small-group, and large-group experiences designed to allow them to build trusting relationships with one another. It is expected that the Council can serve as a role model for the larger community with regard to bridging social capital. Also, in engaging in their own relationship-building process, EC members will gain important insights that can be incorporated into the design of new strategies (i.e., the think tank aspect of their job).

Where the “action” occurs within the ECHO Council.

The ECHO Council meets bi-monthly to learn about community issues, consider opportunities for building social capital, set strategic direction, review progress, and strengthen relationships among members. However, the majority of the “action” occurs within the various committees, programs teams and Conversation Groups which generally meet monthly and involvement is opened to the community at-large except where indicated. It is during these meetings/gatherings that action-oriented tasks are discussed and implemented. Below are brief descriptions of each committee and its future endeavors.

WS, Can We Talk? and Conversation Groups

The Outreach Committee develops and implements approaches that engage the larger community in the work of building social capital. Its first efforts were to organize the **Conversation Groups** as a way to bring diverse people together to discuss issues and get to know each other. In January 2008, the committee launched **Winston-Salem, Can We Talk?** As a way to strengthen and enlarge the Conversation Groups by opening the concept to the entire Winston-Salem community for networking, relationship-building and dialogue focused on specific topics.

WS Time Banking Network

The concept is: “For giving one hour of your time doing something you like to do for someone else, you can receive one Time Dollar to exchange for something that you need done. The ECHO Council has implemented the TimeBanking concept internally to build relationships among its members and is beginning to replicate the model with its various community partners. Currently, community partners include Green Street United Methodist Church and All God’s Children with plans to expand Timebanking to the broader Winston-Salem community.

StoryLine Project

StoryLine is a local story sharing initiative which will invite Winston-Salem/Forsyth County residents to tell their stories in a welcoming and comfortable environment. The StoryLine project will use a mobile recording studio, a “story bus”, which will travel to various places throughout the community, collecting the stories of the many different kinds of people who make up our community. These stories will be shared with the community via the Internet, radio and at local venues. The goal is to illuminate the rich diversity of voices throughout our community and to celebrate our history, hopes and common humanity.

Community Forums

The ECHO Council will establish itself as an “expert convener” on key community issues (e.g., immigration), providing a safe, neutral space for different points of view to be aired. The intent is not to advance a particular position, but rather to ensure that all perspectives are heard.

Standing Committees

Core Team

As the executive board/governing body of the ECHO Council, the Core Team provides oversight of overall operations and financial management of the ECHO Council and its various initiatives..

Membership Committee

The ECHO Council is intentionally inclusive of all perspectives in the community (defined by sector, race/ethnicity, age, etc.). The Membership Committee is responsible for recruiting potential members and making nominations to the full ECHO Council. The EC seeks individuals who understand the importance of building strong relationships as a part of the process to get to the more action-oriented accomplishments.

Anti-Racism Committee

The Council recognizes that social capital cannot be built without dealing with racism, particularly the kind that subtly permeates our institutions. The Anti-Racism Team, guided by Crossroads Ministry of Chicago and the Winston-Salem Institute for Dismantling Racism (IDR), will offer ongoing assistance to the Council to develop our structure in a way that does not perpetuate structural racism. This work might include: helping build awareness of issues of racism, educating and fostering community dialogue about racism and partnering with other entities working to dismantle racism.

Marketing

This team consists of individuals experienced in marketing and public relations who are interested in educating the community about social capital as well as the many efforts spawned by the ECHO Council and its various committees. The goal is to develop messages, images, stories, and activities that encourage a wide cross-section of community residents to “step outside their comfort zones” and become more actively engaged in the life of the community, especially in situations where they connect with diverse groups.

If you are interested in learning more about any of the above ECHO Council teams or interested in joining the ECHO Council, please email Montez Lane at

ymlane@wfubmc.edu or call her at 336-713-5066.