

Words Create Worlds, March 2007



Gift of the Month - What Kind of World Do You Want?, an Appreciative Inquiry book by Jim Lord is available, free, as a twice-weekly email serial. Sign up at <http://whatkindofworld.com/2007/03/24/email-serial/>

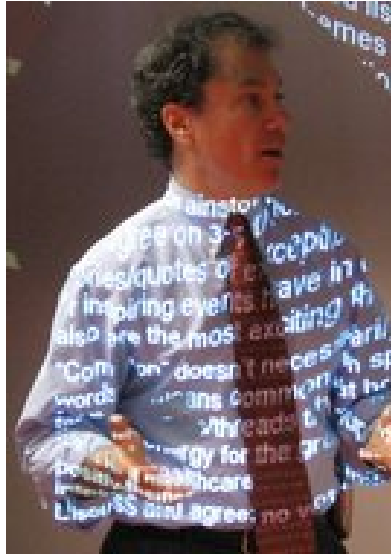
September 16-19 . Third International Appreciative Inquiry Conference, Orlando, FL

November 1-3 . SAVE THESE DATES! Something special to be announced at a later date ☺

Congratulations to five new AI Facilitators: **Ezelle Theunissen**, Cape Town, South Africa; **Lisa McIlwain**, **Daria White** and **Ed White**, all of Darmariscotta, Maine; and **Jayne Peaslee**, Corning, New York.

Ezelle Theunissen <yeshe@iafrica.com>, an independent consultant, participated in AIFT Cape Town; Charles Miller and Nancy Stetson were the co-Trainers. **Ezelle** successfully facilitated an Appreciative Inquiry for an NGO that provides care to AIDS caregivers. The Inquiry group was made up of a diverse group of women. Given the nature of their work, they have asked for confidentiality.

Of her experience as an AI Facilitator, **Ezelle** said, "A well-prepared, structured and positive experience, with an organization that embraces the principles of AI and has every opportunity and seeming intention of incorporating an AI stance into the organisation's structure and processes. I could honestly not have wished for a more positive experience."



Stakeholder Jim Baillinson of Maine Health “wears” directions at a Miles Health Care Inquiry

The trio from Miles Health Care in Maine co-facilitated an Inquiry for the Miles Memorial Hospital Performance Improvement Committee (PIC) in late February: **Lisa McIlwain** <lmcilwain@mileshealthcare.org>, Vice President of Human Resources; community member **Daria White** <cosmo@tidewater.net>, and **Dr. Ed White** <ewhite@healthcare.org>, Orthopedic Surgeon, board member and PIC member. All three participated in AIFT Atlantic City; Nancy Stetson was the Trainer.

The Miles Memorial Hospital Performance Improvement Committee (PIC) is a Hospital Board Committee charged with overseeing the %quality+issues at the hospital. It has a broad range: clinical, environmental, safety and litigation across the entire health care organization. There are about 20 members and 5-6 others who regularly attend. The IC is comprised of board members, administrators, nurses and physicians. It meets monthly and reports directly to the hospital board.

The trio identified the PIC as a logical first group on which to focus their attention because the members are key stakeholders of the health care organization (the CEO, the immediate past board chair, a past board chair who is also a board member of Maine Health, the health system parent organization to Miles, several physicians, and several vice-presidents) who, the trio said, %would likely be able to promote Appreciative Inquiry as a normal way of conducting business should they be favorably impressed by the process.+

A core group was convened in early January. It consisted of the three AI Facilitators, the committee chair, the VP of Quality and the secretary for the committee. The positive topic they identified was %Tapping into Our Collective Energy to Create Extraordinary Health Care.+

In February, the trio co-facilitated a four-hour mini-inquiry, using the five generic processes. Thirteen of the members were able to attend: three administrators, two physicians, the hospital legal counsel and seven board members. A short Power Point introduction to AI was followed by an hour of paired interviews, and an hour of discovering and articulating PIC's "positive core". After sharing the stories, they identified PIC's "life giving forces" as: in depth discussions of evocative topics; the growth that occurs during difficult times; listening beyond words; thriving in a non-blaming culture; expressions of appreciation; satisfied employees; operating with a sense of urgency; and diversity of opinion.



After an energized visual imagery session, the two small groups created statements that spoke to PIC's dedication to employee wellbeing and making decisions based on reporting and discussions with a sense of urgency in recognition of the need to facilitate change in a fluid healthcare environment. The groups then developed a number of Bold Ideas or Strategic Intentions to realize the Provocative Propositions.

The Chair and Vice President of Quality committed to changing the agenda of PIC's meetings in order to realize the Provocative Propositions. The VP of Quality also accepted responsibility for coaching visitors who make reports to PIC as to how the meetings are run. The members who work directly with other employees committed to identifying inspiring co-workers who will be invited to the PIC to share their stories.

Ed is a member of PIC; he will monitor the changes and their impact. He will be able to judge, first hand, the influence the mini-inquiry has and track its persistence. In three months, the trio will reconvene the core group to discuss the experience and evaluate its effectiveness at "moving us toward a preferred future."

The facilitators hoped to: Introduce AI and its potential to key members of the Miles Organization; Maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the PIC; Gain experience in the process involved in employing the principles of AI; Have a positive experience that would empower the trio to use an appreciative approach in more challenging and larger situations in the Miles organization; and Give the trio an initial experience of facilitating AI, with the ultimate goal of appreciating the value of discussions between Miles and a neighboring hospital that are considering a merger.

According to the trio, %We learned about the power of letting the group find its way while we lit the path. The anxiety resulting from anticipating being in the spotlight and having our credibility on the line was quickly dissipated when each step of the four-hour session easily flowed into the next. We did not need to concern ourselves with content, only with structure and that had been well learned at the AIFT.+

They also learned that a common theme in AI sessions would be that participants place getting to know the people with whom they work at a more personal level as one of the highest benefits of the experience.

Finally, they learned that they wanted to use AI in more challenging and larger situations such as a possible merger.

Lisa, Darla and Ed each had a %personal best+experience. One was witnessing a doubter engage in the visual imagery session with reckless abandon. Another was watching the scatter gram take form, identifying the PICs positive core. The third was observing true AI buy-in and thoughtful sharing of opinions from PIC members.

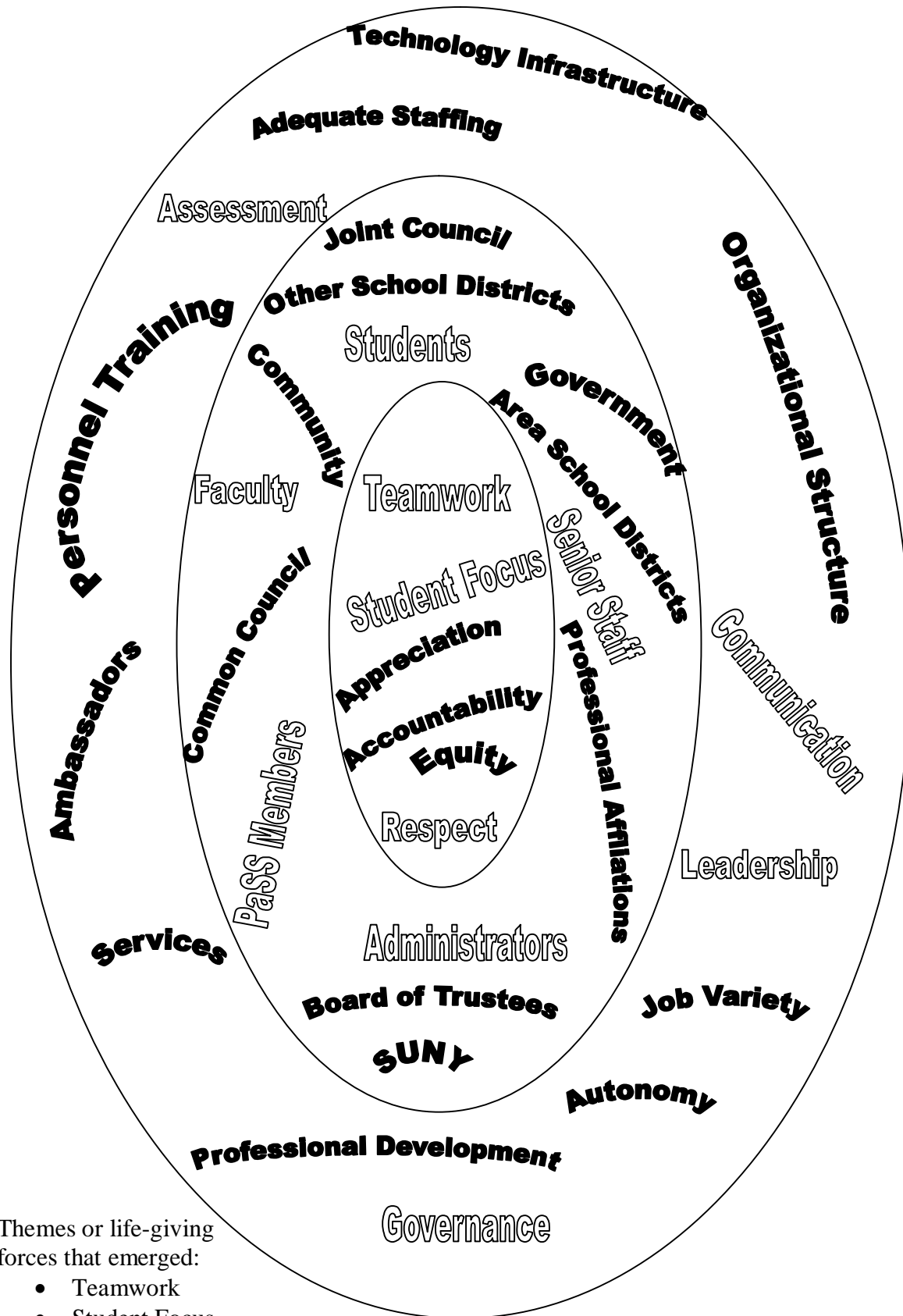
Jayne Peaslee <peaslejew@corning-cc.edu>, Director of Professional Development at Corning Community College, NY, participated in AIFT Corning. Trainers were Charles Miller and Jeanie Cockell.

In 2004, Corning Community College's governance structure was redesigned to allow all employees to have a voice in decision-making: Faculty Assembly, Administrators Assembly, and Professional and Support Staff (PaSS) Assembly. **Jayne** worked with the Administrators Assembly, 46 mid- managers and administrative assistants representing all non-academic departments of the College. She facilitated AI over a five-month period, immediately after regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Members of the Assembly wanted to use AI to create a Mission Statement that would inspire the group's actions.

The positive topic that the Core Group identified for inquiry was %practices we do best+ and to use those best practices as a guide for creating more successes. Members of Administrators Assembly paired up and interviewed each other regarding a time when they felt most valued at the College. From themes that were present in the stories, the group created several Provocative Propositions.

They also used the Goose Egg Technique to identify the dreams and values of their ideal working conditions, as well as the design elements that supported those ideal working conditions.

Administrator Assembly's Design Elements, Stakeholders, Values



Themes or life-giving forces that emerged:

- Teamwork
- Student Focus
- Respect

Impact: The group used the Provocative Propositions and the life-giving forces to create a Mission Statement:

The commitment of the Administrators Assembly of the College Association of Corning Community College is to establish an environment whereby members express their issues and ideas, discuss possibilities and initiate change. The members foster teamwork with colleagues and students through appreciation and respect. We are passionate about the success of students and address student needs proactively. As a vibrant leadership group that encourages full participation of our members, we celebrate the accomplishments of all.

They presented the Mission Statement to Joint Council, which has member representation from all three assemblies and is chaired by the President of the College, for consensus approval. The College President plans to present this statement to the Board of Trustees and file it as an official Mission Statement for the Administrators Assembly.

Administrators Assembly officers plan to incorporate a method of celebrating the accomplishments of members each month by presenting a trophy award to one person who is a star above the rest in exhibiting appreciation and respect to colleagues and sincerely addressing student needs.

Jayne is the Administrator Assembly chair-elect for next year; she plans to incorporate a time at each meeting to share great happenings at CCC where people share their success stories and also plan to have a monthly star above award presentation to a deserving member who exhibits appreciation and respect to colleagues and students.

Jayne said, I learned from this experience that indeed the members were hungry for guidance and affirmation of their purpose. They need positive reinforcement and continual assurance that they do make a difference in the new governance structure.

Her personal best experience was when the group composed a Mission Statement that was such a positive affirmation of who they were as members of the Administrators Assembly. They exclaimed, Yes! This is our Mission Statement! This is who we are! She said she could see the pride in their eyes and the satisfaction of being a part of a group that will move forward with integrity and respect for CCC employees and students.

Best wishes,



Nancy Stetson

Editor, Words Create Worlds
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