

Making the Connections

A collection of community stories from Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary

Written by Justin Hopper

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Making the Connections amplifies the voices of grassroots innovators who led 100 diverse and vibrant community-based projects, under the banner of Community Connections, at Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary in 2008. As part of the year-long celebration, civic leaders and citizen volunteers constructed public art icons, cut environmental pathways, recorded regional lore, and heightened social responsibility.

Led by The Sprout Fund, the initiative enabled communities across the 14 counties of Southwestern Pennsylvania to decide for themselves many unique ways to commemorate Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary. By granting \$1 million of support in small sums, Community Connections enabled projects to reach across the geographic and demographic lines that often impede broad-based community conversations.

Making the Connections tells the stories of regional activists, community leaders, and other exceptional individuals who used ingenuity and determination to create a vast array of projects.

The Trail Town Public Art Project commissioned lasting pieces of public art in six towns along the Washington, D.C.-to-Pittsburgh Great Allegheny Passage hiking/biking trail.

The Environmental Oral History Project recorded 125 interviews with Southwestern Pennsylvanians, documenting the incredible relationship this region's people have with its diverse environment—and its industrial past.

A new 18th-century fortress at the Old Bedford Village living-history center galvanized the Bedford community around the town's own 250th anniversary and created a permanent asset to make the Village one of America's premier history destinations.

Fisherman's Tale took Pittsburgh's homebound African-American seniors fishing at the region's lakes and waterfronts—and gave them the opportunity to open up about their health and their histories.

The C3 Community Car Care Ministry, a new cheap-to-free garage, was started to help alleviate the drastic transportation problem prevalent in rural Mercer County.

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Readership & Interested Parties

- ≡ The hundreds of Southwestern Pennsylvanians who led Community Connections projects, and the thousands more who participated in and were affected by their work
- ≡ Community-oriented individuals and organizations in the Greater Pittsburgh region
- ≡ Activists, organizations, and grantmakers throughout the United States interested in the unique story of Community Connections' creation, implementation, and strategy

Contents & Features

- ≡ Narrative chapters on Community Connections projects grouped into broad categories, including art, history, outdoors, and community service, each illustrated with lush imagery by some of the region's top young photographers
- ≡ Background on the larger Pittsburgh 250 initiative and role of Community Connections in directly engaging citizens in the celebration of this major regional milestone
- ≡ Essays by several well-known community leaders, including Pittsburgh 250 Chairman James E. Rohr and Executive Director Bill Flanagan, Mike Kane of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, and the Community Connections Co-Chairs

Project Team

- ≡ Author Justin Hopper is a long-standing member of the Pittsburgh arts, music, and writing community, and a frequently-published regional and national features writer.
- ≡ Landesberg Design is an award-winning, Pittsburgh-based design and visual communication firm.
- ≡ The Sprout Fund is a nonprofit organization supporting innovative ideas and grassroots community projects that are catalyzing change in the Pittsburgh region.