



Sample Speech to Civic Organization

Introduce the Community Frame -- Lifetrack's work is about strong communities.

Good evening. My name is Jane Jones and I'm here representing Lifetrack Resources. I want to thank you for taking the time to come hear about the work we are doing. I always find it so rewarding to speak with civic organizations like the Rotary because we share a common goal. We are all here tonight because we care deeply about our community, and we strive in a variety of ways to enhance the quality of life in our community. That's what Lifetrack Resources is all about -- community.

Reinforce with examples of community

Some wonderful images come to mind when I think of our community. I think of the park on Elm Street with nonstop softball games all weekend long. I think of the senior center where senior citizens gather for lunch every day. I think of our new library filled with young minds eager to learn.

Develop the idea of people at the margins of society; this leads to weak

But in every community, and ours is no exception, there are people who live on the edge of society. Some didn't finish school, some have a troubled past, some suffer from mental or physical disabilities, some are new to this country, and so on. It is tempting to simply pretend that these problems don't exist, or convince ourselves that these are small, inconsequential problems that affect just a few. But left unchecked, these are the kinds of issues that can dramatically affect our quality of life. At a certain point, it is difficult to sustain a community when too many people are living at the margins.

A mechanism, like spiraling decline, helps people to understand the consequences.

On my way here I drove down the North Central Boulevard. Twenty years ago this was a thriving community. But what do we see now? We see a community that is on a downward spiral. About one of every four retail businesses has closed, and homelessness and crime are on the rise. Increasing unemployment makes it difficult to attract new businesses. And so the spiral begins -- fewer opportunities lead to homelessness and crime, increased homelessness and crime lead to fewer opportunities.

Metaphors also create vivid images that support the concept of Lifetrack's influence on communities.

When communities begin to fray around the edges, it is up to people like us who care deeply about the fate of our community, to pull out the needle and thread and fix the worn edges before the damage becomes irreparable.

Introduce work as a value, and begin to describe the obstacles that affect various populations.

In short, that's what Lifetrack Resources does. We work at the edge of society, finding the places where the community is frayed and repairing them to make the community as a whole stronger. We do this by valuing work. When people work, they are contributing to society and they feel better about themselves and the community.

But stable, productive work can be out of reach for those who struggle with physical or mental health issues, or do not speak English, or have problems in their background to keep them from getting hired. We work with these people at the margins, building the skills they need, whatever they are, to become productive members of the community.

Include Can Do, common sense, and the values of interdependence and prevention.

We have two choices: ignore those on the margins and hope any negative influence on society is minimal, or, take the time to work with those on the margins so they become a positive influence in our communities. Simple common sense tells us that we all benefit when everyone in the community is contributing to the well-being of the community. If we want stable communities, we need to take care of problems before they become overwhelming.

Transition to examples of the affected populations, but always connect them to community.

For example, in most communities there are few programs in place to help ex-offenders become established, productive members of the community. Therefore, most revert to the lifestyles and the situations that led them to crime in the first place. This virtually guarantees that they will continue to commit crimes. Why would we allow a revolving door in prison when we can use this opportunity to change lives and strengthen the community?

Why would we allow those with mental or physical health issues to calcify, when they can be vibrant contributors?

Why would we allow immigrants to live in a haze of misunderstanding, when language training can help them become engaged citizens?

Describe Lifetrack's work based on its relationship to community.

At Lifetrack Resources, we seek out the most difficult cases, the people who are unable to lead any semblance of a normal life, and we work closely with them to address whatever obstacles they face and to teach whatever skills they need, to be productive members of the community. We mentor them as they grow and develop, until eventually they can serve as a role model for others, an example that reverberates throughout the community.

Civic organizations like the Rotary have an important role to play in helping to move people from the margins into the mainstream. By supporting the work of organizations like Lifetrack Resources, by providing outreach opportunities to marginal populations, by developing support in the community for our work, you expand the impact of your own work and improve the quality of life for everyone.

Thank you.