WHERE WE CONNECT

YEAR IN REVIEW

2018
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Thank you for making time to read our Year in Review. What a year it has been! We have crisscrossed the state partnering with you to engage citizens in deliberation on key issues, to equip communities to work better together, and to encourage the next generation to build and exercise civic skills.

Although we’re proud of the accomplishments listed in the following pages, we’re proudest of our partnerships with you that are essential to improving civic health across our state. We believe that communities are rich in capacity to address their own challenges by leveraging their assets. As a result, we pursue genuine partnerships with communities, rather than episodic parachuting into communities. In 2018, thanks to partnering with you, we saw citizens, communities, and networks make new connections to civic life.

As you peruse this Year in Review, I invite you to reflect on all that you accomplished to improve civic life in your neighborhood, community, and our state as we near the end of a busy year. Thank you for building connections, fostering partnerships, and engaging your fellow citizens. We look forward to continuing the good work together in 2019!

-Cristin F. Browner


-Niobe Way

The Crisis of Connection: Roots, Consequences, and Solutions
Numbers are only part of the story. At the DMC, we know that to tell a complete story, we have to complement quantitative data with qualitative storytelling, in order to understand the ways in which data is made manifest in the everyday lives of Alabamians. What the numbers show is that Alabamians are hungry for community, and dedicated to renewing civic life in our state. Alabamians want more opportunities to come together.

We’re honored to help them do exactly that.
The Mathews Center is about partnerships. Our work is really not about us at all—it’s about our community partners; our role is connective. We want to create new connections between and amongst the organizations and individuals already doing the work required to rebuild and renew public life and civic education on the ground in their communities. We are perennially blown away by the creativity, tenacity, and selflessness of our community partners, and we are forever grateful for not only their partnership, but also their friendship. 2018 was truly a year of collaborative firsts. Hear what our partners have to say for yourself.

This year, the DMC teamed up with the Alabama Bicentennial Commission to offer nine teacher workshops in counties across our state. The workshops are a crash course in how to bring deliberation into the classroom using materials that are relevant and place-based, giving students the chance to think critically about their communities and their place in Alabama’s past, present, and future. You can get the teacher handbook, Place-Based Deliberation in the Classroom, here.

Civic media and community journalism are a vital part of public life and DMC programming. One of our long-term partners, the Alabama Humanities Foundation, hosted a series of public panels on the role of an informed citizenry in democratic life, and the DMC was honored to facilitate the conversation. The series, “What Comes to Light,” featured Pulitzer Prize-winning Alabama journalists alongside reporters, writers, and media scholars, all coming together to discuss the responsibility of citizens to stay not only engaged, but informed. We are delighted to work with AHF to keep the conversation going.

"APT appreciates our long-term relationship with the DMC. We’ve partnered to offer a series of student, teacher, and community discussions on the theme of freedom, fairness and opportunity in the U.S. We held discussions about Alabama’s workforce needs as part of the national “American Graduate: Getting to Work” initiative. We especially value the perspective and skills the DMC staff bring to the table to ensure that discussions are respectful and all voices have a chance to be heard.”

-Roy Clem, Executive Director, Alabama Public Television
The internship program views the community as an asset rather than an audience. Our community partners and the work we imagine doing together has a tangible quality to it; this project will be a means for our student interns to glimpse the possibilities created by collaborative effort.

-Pam Horn, Faculty Mentor, SUSCC

The DMC is and has been a longtime and very valuable partner. In October they visited five sites across Alabama to teach strategies for leading citizen coalitions with our staff. They continue to add valuable information and insight to all 67 of our county offices.

-Stan Windham, Assistant Director County Office Operations, ACES

NEW RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS.

2018 was a big year for original writing by DMC staff and interns! In addition to our ever-expanding blog, staff also wrote pieces for the Alabama League of Municipalities Journal and the Kettering Foundation’s annual publication, Connections. We’ve also been hard at work creating new resources for deliberation, including a historical issue guide on the Creek War, and our very own What’s Next, Alabama? issue guide has been released in Spanish!

Click on the publications and resources below to read more!

-Citizenship is Not a Spectator Sport-
[ALM Journal]

-Who, We? The People’s Guide to the Ballot Box-
[ALM Journal]

-Good Fences-

-“The Creek War of 1813-1814: What Would You Do?”-
[ALM Journal]

-“Community as Classroom: Overcoming Civic Deserts”-
[ALM Journal]

-“Be Together Differently: The 2018 Civic Institute”-

-“Remembering Us”-

-“Leadership: Door Openers vs. Gate Keepers”-
[ALM Journal]

-“Decentralizing the Center”-
[Kettering Connections]

-“Civic Dispatch: As Time Goes By”-

-“The Kids Are Alright”-

-“Full Circle: Students’ Institute from a New Perspective”-

-“¿Qué Sigue, Alabama?”-

-“Place-Based, Deliberative Learning in the Classroom”-

-“Good Fences”-

-“Remembering Us”-

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MARION ROYSTON WINS ANNUAL JEAN O’CONNOR-SNYDER AWARD FOR HER WORK IN CIVIC EDUCATION

MONTEVALLO JUNIOR CITY COUNCIL WINS NATIONAL CIVVY AWARD IN D.C.

“Be Together Differently” was the theme of this year’s 3rd Annual Civic Institute. The DMC was honored to welcome over 200 visitors from all over the state and country! Workshops were offered on a rich array of topics, including “Passing the Mic: Representation & Empathy in Civic Media,” “The Front Doors of Fellowship: Engaging Difference Through Faith,” and “Cultivating Youth Participation in Civic Deserts” We’re so thankful for everyone who was able to make this year’s Civic Institute the biggest and best yet!

The Montevallo Junior City Council (MJCC) was honored at the National Conference on Citizenship (NCOC) with its “Committee’s Choice Civvy Award” for their outstanding work incorporating youth perspectives into the fabric of public life! MJCC grew out of the work of a few students, many of which were a part of the DMC’s Students’ Institute program. We are thrilled to see them set the bar for youth engagement nationally!

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MILESTONES AND MILEAGE.

21,981 Miles Driven
1,954 Alabamians Engaged
200+ Civic Institute Attendees

12 CONFERENCES ATTENDED
- NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP (NCOC)
- NATIONAL COALITION FOR DIALOGUE & DELIBERATION (NCDL)
- ALABAMA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALLA)
- GULF SOUTH SUMMIT
- RURAL TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT
- ALABAMA SOCIAL STUDIES CONFERENCE
- ALABAMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
- BLACK BELT ROOTS SUMMIT
- SOUTHEAST MUSEUMS CONFERENCE
- AL PRO HEALTH SUMMIT
- AHF COLLOQUIUM
- A PUBLIC VOICE