



ARE YOU AN INFORMATION VACUUM?

by Regina Funkhouser

This community is filled with some very smart people. I am fortunate enough to have many opportunities to witness some very thoughtful, solution driven discussions. Recently, I had the opportunity to be present during community conversations with the Great Start Collaborative, the Juvenile Justice Coalition, Enterprise Group, Human Services Coordinating Alliance and Jackson 2020.

While each mission is diverse: fix our education system, serve youth, help those in poverty, improve the economic health of our city – the vision is the same: build a better community.

And, the conclusions have all been the **same** in every room:

1. All are concerned and all want the best for our community
2. All are coming up with the same solutions
3. Very little is known about what is currently being done and who is trying to do it
4. We operate in an information vacuum

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The basic philosophical definition of wisdom is to make the best use of knowledge. We get in "meeting comas" – going from one to another, methodically going through each agenda item with the primary goal of getting to adjournment. We take in this massive amount of data, projects, funding streams... make copious notes to include in meeting minutes, but don't apply anything we have learned.

I see one group struggling with a massive issue, and literally across the street, another organization receives a grant to address the same issue and needs help to accomplish the work. Neither knows the other exists and seeks the same solution. Their missions are different, but solutions are the same.

How do we connect the dots? How do we share the information we have – and collect information to pass along? Every meeting agenda should include "What is going on in other groups/organizations/collaboratives that we should know about."

As you start the New Year, please add to your list of resolutions to turn off the suction! Look for – and help others see – opportunities to share information and collaborate. Take responsibility for being a connector, a conveyor and a resource.