Children & Nature Network
Grassroots Gathering 2013

Grassroots Movement Building in Public Health

San Diego, California
September 4, 2013

Mark Pertschuk
Director
Grassroots Change: Connecting for Better Health
Oakland, California
Grassroots Change: Connecting for Better Health

Preemption and Movement Building in Public Health
Research, Professional Education, and the Institute of Medicine

Grassroots Change: Connecting for Better Health
June 2012 – June 2014
Advocacy, GrassrootsChange.net, and Movement Support

www.GrassrootsChange.net
Facebook: Grassroots Change
Twitter: @GCPublicHealth
Preemption and Movement Building in Public Health
Key Informant Interviews 2010

- Eighteen key informants, including:
  - Advocates
  - Researchers
  - Community organizers
  - Public officials

- National sample representing all regions of the US

- What we asked:
  - What is a “grassroots movement”?
  - How does movement building benefit public health?
  - How do you build a movement?
• Alcohol
• Tobacco
• Gun violence
• Reproductive health
• Drug policy
• Obesity prevention
• Education
• Farm worker health

• Healthcare
• HIV/AIDS
• Public health Infrastructure
• Environmental justice
• School food
• LGBT health
• Fire prevention
An organized effort to address threats to the health and safety of the community, led by activated citizens and organizations that devote resources to building grassroots capacity.

Usually built around a single issue or concern that energizes individuals who join in common cause.
In the Words of Grassroots Leaders

- “Residents and those who are **directly impacted** by an issue are... making change and **taking leadership**.”

- “[I]t’s not just one local community struggling, but our struggles are related, connected - we have a broad view about how to move [the] landscape in fixing the [problems].”

- “A grassroots movement [is] people organizing at the local level to bring about change on a particular issue... And sometimes that starts at the community level and **grows to a state level movement or a national movement or even a global movement.**”

  - Key Informant interviews 2010
Anatomy of a Grassroots Movement: At the intersection of Passion, Strategy, and Capacity

Passion
Grassroots engagement & leadership

Strategy
Stepwise goals & Being Strategic

Capacity
Grassroots experience
Management
Communications

Grassroots Change, 221 Oak Street, Oakland, CA 94607
(510) 548-4053 www.GrassrootsChange.net
Grassroots Movement

Noun
1. An organized effort to address threats to the health of the community, led by grassroots advocates and groups.
2. How to make real change in public health.

Usage: <Grassroots movements change society, not just laws.>

The Benefits of Public Health Movement Building

- Power
- Education
- Passion
- Capacity
- Policy Change
- Innovation
- Social Change
- Social Capital
- Sustainability

Building a Grassroots Movement

Social Change

Policy Change

Accountability & Power

Social norms change

Public education

Grassroots passion and leadership

Capacity

Technical assistance, training, media, network management

Communications

The Grassroots Dialogue

Media advocacy

Strategy

Stepwise goals

Rule of Thirds: Energize supporters, engage the middle

Leadership

Grassroots experience & expertise

221 Oak Street, Oakland, CA
94607 (510) 548-4053
www.GrassrootsChange.net
Movement Building

Grassroots Leadership

- Entrepreneurial leaders with practical experience in grassroots advocacy, network management, and communications
- Listening to activists builds TRUST
- Translate passion into strategic goals

Technical assistance and training provided by experienced grassroots advocates can help budding movements and leaders in planning, advocacy, and movement management.
Movement Building

Grassroots Capacity

Movements need more than passion - they need the people, expertise and technologies to run effective organizations and campaigns. This includes:

- Network management
- Internal communications
- Fundraising
- Media advocacy
Movement Building

Strategy

- Planning a grassroots movement is different than strategic planning in general.

- Movement goals must energize grassroots activists, but they must also be achievable. Each small victory should be a meaningful step toward achieving ultimate success.

- Effective goals must energize committed advocates while appealing to those who are undecided but open to change. *Don’t waste energy trying to reach those people who will never agree with your goals.*

- Finally, all of a movement’s energy must be focused on its chosen goals and avoid wasting energy and resources on other activities.
Grassroots Movement Building and Preemption in the Campaign for Residential Fire Sprinklers

Mark Pertschuk, JD, Robin Hobart, MPH, MPP, Marjorie Paloma, MPH, Michelle A. Larkin, JD, RN, MS, and Edith D. Balbach, PhD

Home fires account for 85% of fire deaths in the United States, the majority in 1- or 2-family homes lacking fire sprinklers. Since 1978, however, a grassroots movement has successfully promoted more than 360 local ordinances mandating sprinklers in all new residential construction, including 1- and 2-family homes. The homebuilding industry has responded by seeking state preemption of local authority, a strategy previously used by other industries concerned about protecting their profits. From 2009 through 2011, 13 states adopted laws eliminating or limiting local authority over residential fire sprinklers. This study of the residential sprinkler movement adds to our understanding of grassroots public health movements and provides additional evidence that preemption can have a negative impact on public health and safety. (Am J Public Health. Published online ahead of print August 15, 2013: e1–e8. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301317)

On March 25, 1911, a fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City killed 146 workers. Although an effective fire sprinkler had public health practitioners (and most researchers), the term “preemption” usually refers to “ceiling preemption” by which higher health is either necessary or a valid option. However, these circumstances are rare. According to the Institute of Medicine,

In a few areas of public health, federal preemption seems highly appropriate. For example ... the federal ban on smoking on airplanes—the interstate nature of airline flight makes this area ideally suited to federal preemption.

The valid desire to implement strong, consistent national standards can usually be achieved by adopting minimum standards (i.e., floor preemption) without abrogating state or local authority to adopt stronger public health or safety protections.

We have focused on residential fire sprinklers for 2 reasons: (1) from 1978 until the present, there has been a growing grassroots
Lessons for Grassroots Movement Building

1. A small number of effective grassroots advocates can achieve major changes. The fire sprinkler movement began as a small national network of passionate, trusted local leaders in the fire service, later joined by other advocates. Together, their efforts resulted in the passage of more than 360 ordinances and 2 state laws mandating fire sprinklers in new 1- and 2-family homes.

2. To achieve this kind of success, advocates must work in venues in which their effectiveness is amplified and that of more ostensibly powerful groups is reduced. This generally occurs at local levels of government. There, advocacy results in tangible improvements in public health and safety that further energize grassroots activists. Local laws also have the advantage of local enforcement and educational capacity, which can facilitate implementation.
Lessons for Grassroots Movement Building

3. The successful pursuit of the grassroots strategy requires that local entities have support from state and national organizations.

Depending on the issue, these can be nonprofits, public, or profit-seeking entities. In the case of residential fire sprinklers, national organizations provided training, technical assistance, advocacy tools, and other support to local advocates.
Lessons for Grassroots Movement Building

4. The local strategy can achieve major changes and is the most likely to achieve significant improvements on many public health and safety issues. However, local strategies, particularly those relying on grassroots efforts, may take many years to succeed.

The sprinkler movement took 30 years to achieve widespread success, which is consistent with the experience in other public health movements. It is important for funders and other public health leaders to recognize that, although successful movements can produce fundamental improvements in policies and society, they may take significant time to achieve their ultimate goals.
Grassroots Power and the Future of Public Health

March 8, 2013 | Filed under: Blog, Movement Building | Edit

"Grassroots movements provide an opportunity for everyone to have a voice in what our society looks like — It’s at the core of what a democracy can and should be."

— Shannon Frattaroli, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Interview: Shannon Frattaroli

PhD is Associate Professor at ...
Grassroots Change: Connecting for Better Health

Mark Pertschuk
Grassroots Change
Connecting for Better Health
mark@GrassrootsChange.net
415-250-8260

Share with us...
Kyung Jin Lee, CD
KyungJin@GrassrootsChange.net
Jana Melpolder, GMC
Jana@GrassrootsChange.net

GrassrootsChange.net
Twitter: @GCPublicHealth
Facebook: Grassroots Change