STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

AMERICA SPEAKS

ABOUT AMERICA*SPEAKS*

America*Speaks* gives citizens an authentic voice in local, regional, and national decision-making on the most critical public issues of the day. Our mission is to reinvigorate democracy; we are doing this by developing innovative tools and a rich infrastructure for engaging citizens in the public decision-making that most impacts their lives.

Believing deeply in the collective wisdom of ordinary people, America*Speaks* integrates state-of-the-art technology with small-group, face-to-face dialogue to allow thousands of people to deliberate simultaneously about important issues and come to shared priorities.

More than 150,000 people have had an impact on their communities through America*Speaks*' 21st Century Town Meetings® and other multi-faceted citizen engagement strategies. Founded in 1995, America*Speaks* is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C. Our international arm is Global Voices.

www.americaspeaks.org
www.globalvoices.org

21st Century Town Meeting

America*Speaks*' 21st Century Town Meeting® is a public forum that links citizens to decision-makers on key policy issues. Cutting-edge technology – a combination of keypad polling, groupware computers, large screen projection, webcasts, online dialogues and other techniques – enables simultaneous and iterative small-group, face-to-face dialogue among large numbers of people.

The 21st Century Town Meeting® creates a level playing field on which citizens and residents can be authentically engaged in policy and planning discussions that are directly and transparently linked to decision-makers and real governance processes.

21st Century Summit

In organizational settings, our 21st Century Summit® methodology allows leaders to tap into the collective wisdom of members and stakeholders to identify shared priorities for action.

Community*Forum*

America*Speaks* also offers a small scale, reduced technology version of our meetings, called the Community*Forum.* The Community*Forum* takes the best features of the 21st Century Town Meeting® and tailors them to smaller audiences and lower budgets at the community level.

AMERICA*SPEAKS*

A Message from America*Speaks'* President:

More than any other time in history, people across the nation and at all levels of government are talking about strengthening American democracy. The result is an impressive array of innovations and thoughtful recommendations that respond to President Obama's call for greater participation, transparency and collaboration in our federal government. America*Speaks* is passionate about contributing our experience - and collaborating with other leading organizations in the field - to seize the potential of this moment and help reinvigorate American democracy.

It is clear that the collective American public has a central role to play in strengthening our democracy. Moving from government-as-usual to a new era of governance will require an extraordinary force of public will, combined with enlightened leadership of both political parties. America*Speaks* is passionate and committed to creating ongoing opportunities that bring citizen voices together with decision makers to strengthen America's public life.

As you'll see in these pages, America*Speaks* was active on the strengthening democracy agenda in 2009, including efforts to:

- **Open government** by tapping the wisdom of senior federal agency managers and providing direct input to the President's Open Government Directive (page 2)
- **Leverage the Internet** with online deliberation projects, including "virtual tables" that provide full meeting participation for remote attendees (page 4)
- **Strengthen policy with voices less heard**, including those of global youth (page 6)

The foundation has been laid for a more responsive and accountable government, and there is still much democracy work to be done. Now it is up to all of us to make it real: the White House, elected officials in Congress, federal managers all across the government and we, the people.

Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer, Ph.D.
President and Founder, America*Speaks*

"America*Speaks* demonstrated real leadership in the public engagement field by convening federal managers - who have deep experience in and commitment to public participation - to make recommendations for the development of the Open Government Directive, and rallying the public engagement community to get involved with the Open Government dialogue."

– Beth Noveck, Deputy Chief Technology Officer and Director of the White House Open Government Initiative

OPENING GOVERNMENT

The U.S. federal government is taking unprecedented steps to open government and citizens are being put front and center in efforts for greater participation, transparency and collaboration. Throughout 2009, America*Speaks* contributed our passion, ideas and leadership to this new age of government.

JANUARY

The Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government was issued by President Obama on his first full day in office.

MARCH

White House Open Government Session
Beth Noveck, Deputy Chief Technology Officer and Director of the White House Open Government Initiative, invited Dr. Carolyn Lukensmeyer to be one of twelve participants at a White House listening session that explored how to implement the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government.

Champions of Participation
America*Speaks* co-hosted a workshop where federal managers developed recommendations for the President's Open Government Directive. This Champions of Participation workshop was convened in partnership with Demos, Everyday Democracy and the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University. Managers from twenty-three different federal agencies and departments identified opportunities to leverage and barriers to be addressed, and developed key indicators for evaluating the Directive's progress. Attendees continued their efforts after the workshop and drafted recommendations for creating a more open government, as well as the structures the Directive should use to launch pilot projects and conduct implementation. Beth Noveck attended the workshop and received the managers' recommendations.

Core Principles for Public Engagement
Leading public engagement organizations – including America*Speaks* – collaboratively developed seven principles that serve as ideals to pursue and as criteria for judging quality of public engagement; organized by the National Coalition on Dialogue and Deliberation and International Association for Public Participation.

MAY

Senior Agency Leaders Give Input
Building on the success of Champions of Participation, America*Speaks* and our partners brought together nineteen senior leaders from thirteen federal agencies and departments to provide further input on the Open Government Directive. Beth Noveck

participated in these discussions and responded to their outcomes. Based on years of experience, these federal managers offered constructive advice to the open government effort, including:

- Establish and integrate a process for reporting and measuring progress towards goals of the Open Government Directive
- Develop sufficient training systems to ensure that federal employees have the skills to deliver on open government goals
- Provide agencies with adequate funding to expand transparency, participation and collaborative activities
- Establish an online resource base for sharing of best practices in participation, collaboration and transparency

AUGUST

Strengthening Our Nation's Democracy
Over 100 scholars, federal managers and democracy reform leaders came together to develop and advance a unified agenda for the democracy reform movement at the *Strengthening Our Nation's Democracy Conference*, hosted by America*Speaks* and our partners at Demos, Everyday Democracy and the Ash Institute.

Six key leaders of the Obama Administration attended and shared their plans and accomplishments on democratic participation and reform, including Christina Tchen, Director of the Office of Public Engagement, Sonal Shah, Director of Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation and Julie Fernandes, Deputy Assistant Attorney General.

The result of participants' efforts at the conference and through ongoing workgroups was an action agenda for both the Administration and the democracy reform movement, including:

- Involve the American public in meaningful deliberations about important policy questions
- Support and promote an electoral reform agenda
- Recognize and support engagement carried out by traditionally disenfranchised communities
- Build skills and capacity for public engagement
- Increase the availability of federal funding for democratic participation

DECEMBER

Open Government Directive Results
The Office of Management and Budget released an Open Government Directive to all federal agencies on December 8, which

mandates a series of steps that must be taken by agencies to become more transparent, participatory and collaborative.

Several recommendations from the federal managers and public participation leaders, identified at convenings by America*Speaks*, are incorporated into the Open Government Directive:

1) A requirement that federal agencies convene key policy, legal, procurement, finance and technology staff to create agency open government plans
2) A review of federal policies and rules that currently impede federal agencies from meaningfully involving the public and making available agency information
3) The creation of a working group made up of senior representatives from throughout the federal government – chaired by the Chief Performance Officer in collaboration with the Chief Technology Officer and Chief Information Officer – to share best practices and oversee efforts to reach the President's Open Government goals

ADVANCING THE FUTURE FOR ADULTS WITH AUTISM

"The face of autism is rapidly changing. The National Town Meeting we hosted for Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism engaged over 1,000 stakeholders to create a useful and actionable public policy agenda that will ensure we are better prepared to serve those living with autism who are transitioning to adulthood."

- Peter Bell, Executive Vice President for Programs and Services at Autism Speaks

A generation of people with autism are becoming adults, putting them and their families in financial, programmatic and personal limbo in a society without adequate economic resources to meet their needs. The prevalence of autism has significantly increased during the past 10 years, resulting in an estimated 1.5 million individuals in the U.S. – and tens of millions worldwide – affected by autism.

To grapple with these pressing issues, the Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism (AFAA) National Town Meeting was convened by a consortium of national advocacy organizations for families living with autism, adults with autism, advocates, elected officials, service providers and other community members. America*Speaks* worked with AFAA to design and host a 21st Century Town Meeting®, featuring a central site in Chicago and webcast live to fifteen participating cities. Seventeen additional cities participated through virtual discussion tables.

Participants developed a national policy agenda to address the unique needs of adults living with autism. The result was a set of prioritized strategies for tackling key issues and services for adults with autism, such as housing, employment and community life. Opportunities for action on the local level were also identified, and participants formed connections during the Town Meeting to support this important work.

INNOVATIONS FOR BRIDGING GEOGRAPHY

A National Conversation

The challenge of America's vast geography was overcome by hosting 16 in-person, webcast-connected meetings and 17 virtual tables on the Internet. In real time, all 1,200 participants discussed the same issues, had their ideas considered and reported back as a whole, and each person voted for their priorities.

Virtual Tables

For those who couldn't attend in person, virtual discussion tables engaged people from their home computer using webcasts, online chats, keypad polling and facilitated national discussions via conference call.

Making Connections

Efforts to address the needs of adults with autism have been episodic and uncoordinated. The AFAA Town Meeting created relationships among stakeholders, not just for the day, that continue to grow and develop, laying the foundation for organizations and individuals to continue to work as a coalition.

Staying Engaged

Nine out of ten participants in the AFAA Town Meeting committed to stay involved in the process, and participants in each meeting site identified actions to take on the local level.

BEING HEARD AT THE VIRTUAL TABLE

- Sammi Fredenburg, Marysville, WA

"It wasn't until Joey should have been ready to graduate from high school that we finally found out why he was struggling so hard in classes, would shut down inside, and had few close relationships. A psychiatrist finally gave him a solid diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, which is a high-functioning form of Autism.

The online Autism Forum facilitated by America*Speaks* was outstanding; the first of its kind that I am aware of where the forum is not professionals speaking about the current state of affairs, but predominantly focused on mothers like me who are facing the decision to turn their children over to independent living. The broadcasts came through clearly and were inspiring. We were able to instant message one another while also having group conversation through text and speaking on the phone. The real-time participation gave us at the virtual table a chance to be heard.

I feel considerably more empowered since the Forum, knowing that other parents are undergoing the same concerns I am with their autistic children coming of adult age. Other parents at my virtual table have invited me to an email group, a regional meeting group, social functions, as well as state lobby days. All this makes me feel connected to an effort that is serious about affecting legislation with and on behalf of our autistic children."

America*Speaks* is supporting AFAA through a three-phase project. Phase 1 featured a January 2009 workshop with leading academics and practitioners in the field. Phase 2 was the AFAA National Town Meeting. In Phase 3, AFAA will present the priorities from the Town Meeting to policy makers, including the U.S. Congress' Autism Caucus.

Seal the Deal Global Youth Town Hall

United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the UN Environment Programme partnered with Global Voices (America*Speaks'* international arm) to host *Seal the Deal Global Town Hall*, the largest, truly global, youth town hall ever produced. Seven hundred and fifty young people, ranging in age from 10 to 24 years old and hailing from more than 100 countries, met in Daejeon, South Korea during August 2009 to call on world leaders to stand up and take substantial measures against climate change.

Youth participants produced a joint statement during their Town Hall, expressing concern and frustration that their governments are not doing enough to combat climate change. Participants also addressed the citizens of the planet and urged them to push their governments to create a global green economy. Their statement, "Listen to Our Voices: The Future Needs Strong Vision and Leadership," came out four months before the critical climate talks in Copenhagen and just four weeks ahead of the UN High-Level Summit on Climate Change in New York City.

Participants sent personal letters with copies of their declaration to world leaders in over 100 capitals, including U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, urging them to "seal a meaningful deal on climate change" and to "stop talking and start taking action" at the COP15 talks in Copenhagen. The Town Hall featured an interactive online program which simultaneously engaged 200 participants in 14 webcast sites around the world including Kenya, England, Canada, India, Brazil, Mexico and Thailand.

Many of Seal the Deal's young participants have already taken action steps in their home countries to combat climate change. Twelve year old Jamali Bridgewater from Bermuda raised over $10,000 and has used that money to set up environmental groups in every school in his country.

THE WEBCAST SITES FROM AROUND THE WORLD:

- Australia, Canberra
- Australia, Hobart
- Brazil, São Paulo
- Canada, Vancouver
- China, Beijing
- England, London
- Greece, Athens
- India, Pune
- Kenya, Nairobi
- Mexico, Cuernavaca
- New Zealand, Auckland
- South Korea, Daejeon
- Switzerland, Adelboden
- Thailand, Bangkok
- USA, Sonoma

I Am Part of the Solution

- Abyilene McGuire, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

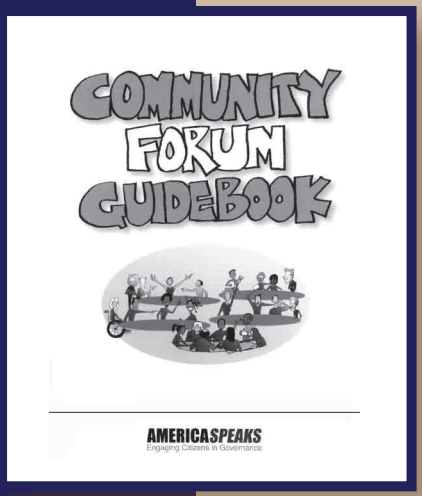
"I wanted to be involved in 'Seal the Deal' because I want to be part of the solution. It was important to send a strong message from global youth prior to the critical talks at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

The Global Town Hall was an extremely exciting, engaging and rewarding experience. The technology was fantastic. It was amazing to submit the results of our Australian discussions over the Internet and see them combined with the ideas of other youth around the world. To take part in the same discussions as participants in South Korea and then hear the strongest themes across all sites was very unique.

It was very empowering that the changes suggested from my remote site made it into the final document within minutes. This showed how your voice really can be heard in influencing policy."

Seal the Deal Town Meeting child and youth participants called on governments around the world to:

- Enact strict laws and provide tough enforcement against those who pollute and degrade the environment, coupled with education and incentives to protect the environment
- Develop and implement clearly defined carbon action plans and climate response strategies, that are monitored and reviewed by an independent multi-national body
- Transition toward a green economy based on renewable energies and offer more incentives for people to buy affordable energy efficient products
- Reduce the number of vehicles and traffic density on our roads and improve affordable public transportation and pedestrian transport systems
- Make engaging environmental education mandatory in schools and universities and promote community environmental awareness - an informed public is a powerful public



Democracy Snapshots

Community*Forum* Trainings

America*Speaks* launched a new training program in 2009. Our Community*Forum* trainings prepare people to develop and implement small scale, reduced technology versions of our 21st Century Town Meeting®. The first group of Community*Forum* trainees were participants of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Rural People Rural Policy initiative.

Community*Forums* provide local leaders with an affordable and effective way to tap into the collective wisdom of their community, identify shared concerns, set priorities and develop action initiatives. Trainees were provided with resources to help them work with local groups or government entities to conduct Community*Forums*, including:

- Training modules for each component of the Community*Forums* method
- Step by step guidebook to help organize and conduct a Community*Forum*
- Samples of materials used at past forums
- Low cost rental of keypads and technical support
- Upon request, technical assistance to guide the design and delivery of a first Community*Forum*

Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean Stakeholder Summit

Five states and countless people who fish, use marine transport and recreate on the water are all concerned about the Mid-Atlantic ocean, which stretches from New York to Virginia. To develop a regionally coordinated approach to ocean use and impacts, America*Speaks* 21st Century Summit® brought together 150 stakeholders of the Mid-Atlantic waters in December 2009.

Representatives from the fields of education, research, the environment, conservation, all levels of government and the industry discussed how the region can better address ocean issues at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean Stakeholder Summit. Topics included off-shore renewable energy, habitat protection, water quality improvement and climate change adaption.

Build Nebraska Housing Policy Summit

At this America*Speaks* 21st Century Summit®, stakeholders discussed strategies for improving housing in their state. The results focused on how to replace dilapidated, substandard and vacant housing with housing that is sustainable and how to get local and state decision makers more involved in Nebraska housing issues.

America*Speaks* 2.0

Integrating online and mobile tools into America*Speaks'* engagement projects has increased the number of people involved, reduced barriers to long distance conversations, engaged people at the time and location of their choosing and offered a variety of commitment levels for participation.

America*Speaks*' face-to-face deliberation process, integrated with technology, is a field leading model which has successfully engaged hundreds of thousands of citizens on the issues which most impact their lives. We continue to translate that competitive advantage into successful online deployments in support of citizen participation projects. Some of the key aspects of our technology driven model are:

Link to Decision Makers – Leaders are involved throughout the process of America*Speaks'* work, and new online tools help citizens stay in contact with decision makers, write letters to the editor and send messages to their fellow participants.

Demographic Diversity – Online and in-person meeting recruitment efforts collect registrants' demographic information with the goal of bringing together a representative group of participants. Outreach activities are refined in response to registrations.

Informed Participation – Videos, audio and articles are developed to enrich the quality of conversation and build knowledge toward a level playing field for participants.

Facilitated Deliberation – "Virtual tables" replicate the facilitated discussion experience of an in-person 21st Century Town Meeting or Summit, allowing full participation for remote meeting attendees.

Discover Shared Priorities – America*Speaks* employs field leading "online consultation" tools that support and engage participants to prioritize challenges, opportunities, actions, or other issues facing a community.

Clear Recommendations for Action – The result of these online engagements is a set of actions representing the views of diverse citizen and stakeholder groups.

Sustaining Citizen Engagement – Online vehicles, such as email, newsletters, website updates and social media, support the dissemination of follow up information and action opportunities.

Through a coordinated process of innovation, investment and learning, America*Speaks* is exploring how we can help fulfill the ideal of online deliberation. With each successful online deliberation, America*Speaks* expands its technological capabilities, experience and reputation, and moves closer to our vision of a robust American democracy.

The Web is transforming our work and lives. America*Speaks* is committed to applying these opportunities to increasing the impact of citizen participation in government decision making. We're calling this America*Speaks* 2.0.

2009 Projects:

Rebuilding Lives Summit
Lake Charles, LA
January 10, 2009

250 people from across Southern Louisiana united for a day to create a Rebuilding Lives Agenda for residents displaced by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike.

Philadelphia Youth Commission Forum on Budget Challenges
Philadelphia, PA
February 18, 2009

With the active involvement of Mayor Nutter, 200 youth built knowledge about the budgeting process and identified the city services most important to them.

Champions of Participation
Washington, D.C.
March 30 – 31, 2009

34 federal managers and staff from 23 different agencies and offices across the federal government developed and delivered recommendations on the Open Government Directive.

eDemocracy Camp
Washington, D.C.
April 19, 2009

100 government staff, web developers and public participation advocates participated in the eDemocracy Camp2 – co-sponsored by America*Speaks* – to advance the use of the Internet for greater citizen voice in policy making and federal agency programs.

National Conversation on Climate Action
Los Angeles, CA, plus more than 70 other communities
April 22, 2009

On Earth Day 2009, local officials, business leaders, community organizations and concerned citizens joined together to address issues surrounding climate action and energy efficiency.

State of the Public Service Stakeholders Forum
Washington, D.C.
May 12, 2009

Participants explored critical connections between workforce health and capacity in agencies and agency performance. Results reported to the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management.

Senior Champions of Participation Meeting
Washington, D.C.
May 12, 2009

19 senior leaders from 13 different federal agencies and departments developed recommendations for the Open Government Directive's goals and what is needed for successful implementation.

Rural People Rural Policy Community*Forum* Training
Denver, CO
May 12 – 14, 2009

W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Rural People Rural Policy networks from around the country convened in Denver and were trained in the preparation and implementation of America*Speaks'* Community*Forums.*

Microsoft Sales, Marketing, and Service Group Conference
Atlanta, GA
July 21, 2009

Over 200 Microsoft employees gathered to develop an organization–wide sense of community and collaboration to sustain them in roles of increased responsibility.

Strengthening Our Nation's Democracy 2
Washington, D.C.
August 2 – 4, 2009

100 experts and advocates of democracy reform and civic engagement came together to create new momentum and plans for critical work that will strengthen America's democracy.

Build Nebraska Housing Policy Summit
Lincoln, NE
August 4, 2009

Over 80 housing and economic development experts and advocates from across Nebraska deliberated and developed priorities for housing and related policies for the state.

Seal the Deal Global Town Hall
Daejeon, South Korea and 14 webcast sites
August 22, 2009

The largest ever truly global youth town hall, 750 young people from around the world developed a message for world leaders, encouraging them to take substantial measures against climate change.

Chicago Jazz Town Hall
Chicago, Illinois
August 31, 2009

Nearly 100 musicians and other members of the Chicago jazz community developed a shared vision and top action priorities for the future of Chicago jazz music.

Dr. Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer Receives the Straus Award
College of the Atlantic
Bar Harbor, ME
September 14, 2009

Carolyn was honored for her continued dedication to strengthening our democracy, practices that make a positive and tangible contribution to the health of our global civil society.

We Can Do Better: Summit on Child Abuse and Neglect
Washington, D.C.
October 22 – 23, 2009

90 professionals from the fields of law enforcement, health and child protective services developed recommendations for the Federal Administration and Congress on reducing child deaths due to abuse and neglect.

California*Speaks*2 Health Care Stakeholder Forums
Redding-Chico, Fresno, San Bernardino-Riverside, San Diego, Los Angeles, Bay Area
November – December, 2009

120 diverse health care leaders discussed and anticipated impacts of the national health care debate on California and its health care system.

***Envision Prince George's* Community Forums**
Prince George's County, MD
November 10 – December 5, 2009

Nearly 700 Prince Georgians from every sector, age, race and ethnicity participated in seven community forums to develop a vision for the county's future. Including a forum conducted entirely in Spanish.

Advancing Future for Adults with Autism National Town Hall
Chicago, IL and 15 webcast sites
November 13, 2009

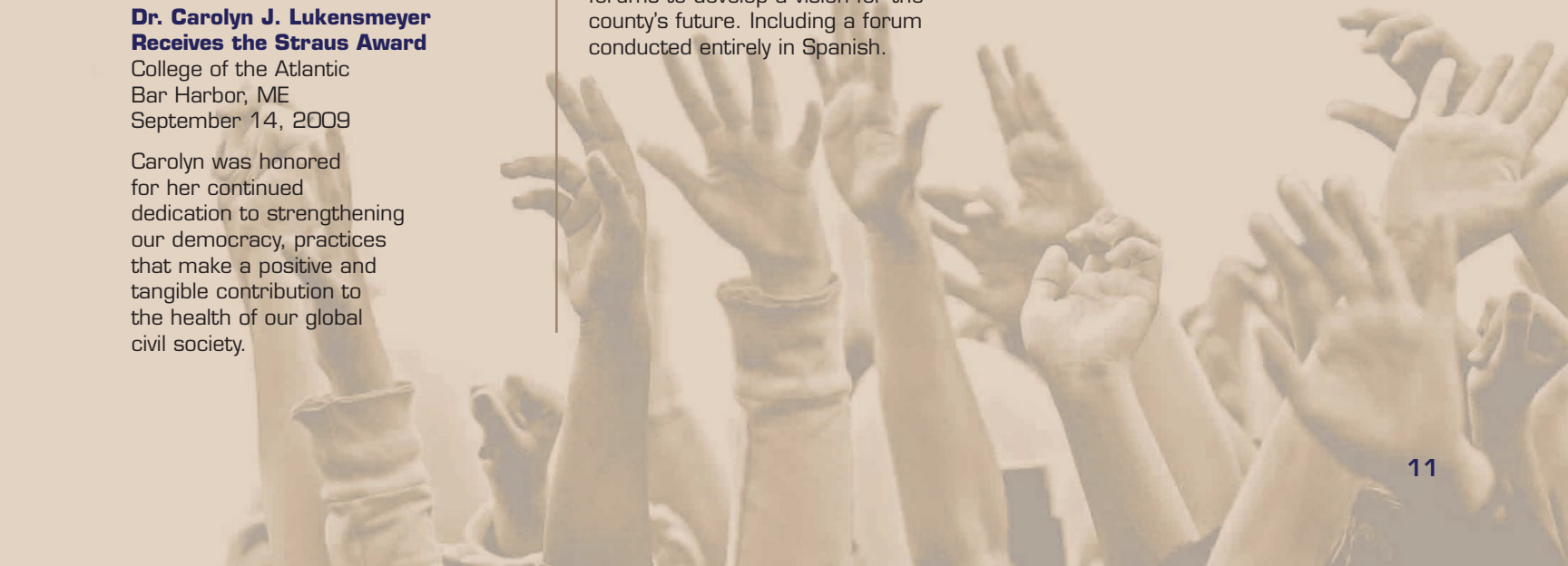
More than 1,200 participants came together in 16 cities to shape a nationwide policy agenda to increase independence, engagement, and quality of life for adults living with autism.

Capacity Building in Croatia
Zagreb, Croatia
November 14 – 15, 2009

Carolyn Lukensmeyer led a capacity building strategy workshop for government employees in Zagreb, Croatia, and spoke at a ceremony alongside the Prime Minister of Croatia and President of the Parliament.

Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean Stakeholder Summit
New York, NY
December 9 – 10, 2009

150 representatives from the full range of ocean interests developed plans for a regionally coordinated approach to Mid-Atlantic ocean use and impacts.



Get Involved With America*Speaks*

PARTICIPATE in an upcoming America*Speaks* meeting. For a list of upcoming opportunities to participate across the country, go to the "Get Involved" tab on our website and choose "Events."

JOIN OUR FACILITATOR Network and our over 5,000 skilled facilitators who make up America*Speaks'* network of dedicated volunteers. For more information, go to the "Facilitators" tab on our website.

STAY INFORMED by subscribing to our quarterly electronic newsletter on public engagement in decision-making. Sign up on our website's home page.

GET CONNECTED to other people who are passionate about revitalizing democracy through America*Speaks'* Facebook page, Linked-In Network and Twitter Feed. Go to our homepage for more information.

KEEP UP TO DATE on the open government directive, learn about the process and discuss new trends and best practices at www.opengovernmentdirections.com.

SPREAD THE WORD by sharing this link to a short video describing America*Speaks'* work www.americaspeaks.org/impact.

REQUEST OUR SERVICES or tell us how we might work together to bring citizen engagement to a pressing issue in your community. Go to the "Get Involved" tab on our website and click "Request our Services."

DONATE TO America*Speaks* Your support will help us strengthen citizen voice on more issues and in more communities. Please support America*Speaks* with a tax-deductible donation today.

WRITE A LETTER to the Editor or your Elected Representatives' in support of local citizen engagement to strengthen democracy.

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