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**'Vision' summit kicks off at St. Benedict Hall**

Oct 26, 2011  
By Kollin Kosmicki

Unrated

Community Vision San Benito's first summit kicked off Wednesday and focused the participants' attention - about 100 people were at St. Benedict Hall for the morning's activities - on the idea of learning to be open-minded to others' views.

Two facilitators hired by Community Vision San Benito, an organization sponsored by Community Foundation for San Benito County, led the first of three days planned for the summit. Those two facilitators are Diane Seehawer and Bob Chadwick.

The goal of the summit, according to organizers, is to "refine a unique and relevant vision for San Benito County and identify our community's priorities for the future - as stated by residents." Seehawer noted that the activities on the first day would involve building the "capacity" for honest conversation. Then they would work on resolving conflicts and discussing important issues the following two days to come away with a broader plan for the community on varying matters.

The summit was scheduled for 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Friday at the church hall, located at 1200 Fairview Road, and it was open to the public.

Chadwick took a few minutes Wednesday to introduce the participants, who were seated in nine groups around the room, to one of Wednesday morning's activities - a greeting circle.

He explained that four people can see varying views when perceiving what's in a room.

"The fact is, there are four walls," he said. "Each of you sees a different wall. When you describe what you see, you believe you have the one-and-only, right view."

Chadwick said people often then try to diminish others' views and talk behind their backs. He said the goal of the day's activities was to "slow you down and help you learn to listen to each other, with respect."

"Every word that every person says has purpose and meaning. There's no throw-away words," he said. "If you trust each other, you'll learn from each other."

That led to the greeting circles in which the participants turned toward others in the groups and greeted them,



Community vision advisory board member and San Juan Bautista resident, Colleen Johnson, meets and greets other San Benito County residents Wednesday morning at the Vision San Benito summit held at St. Benedict Hall.  
Photo by: Nick Lovejoy, Staff Photographer



Bob Chadwick leads the group of San Benito County residents through the meeting Wednesday, the first of three days of workshops.  
Photo by: Nick Lovejoy, Staff Photographer

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eventually multiple times with each person during the session.

During a break, Tres Pinos organic farmer Paul Hain said he was happy to be there.

"I am expecting that there's a good opportunity for everybody's voices to be heard," he said. "The people in the room are influential in the community. We should see what product comes out of it and not be prejudice toward it, and just let it flow."

Seehawer said the participants were there to "do something real."

"If you have only five leaders in a community, it's very difficult to get something done," she said. "If you have a community of leaders, nothing will stop you."

See more later on the three-day summit.

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**Kollin Kosmicki**

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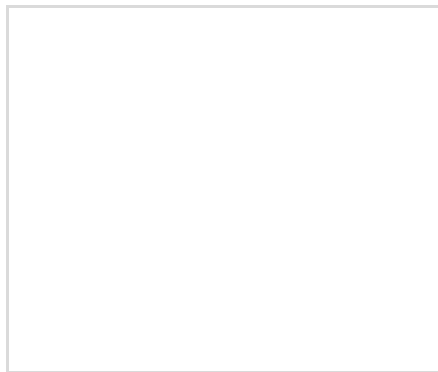
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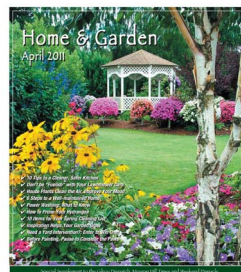


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