Our Plenary Presentation . . . . Understand . . . Imagine . . . Create!

In our plenary sessions, Bliss Browne will lead us through an interactive workshop on dealing constructively with change at a personal, institutional and community level. In this hands-on, “train-the-trainer” workshop you will learn and apply the power and effectiveness of Appreciative Inquiry, Imagine Chicago’s pioneering frameworks for building community, along with current models of individual change and identity in your work. You will leave this workshop with greater understanding, tools and strategies for enabling constructive change from the individual to the community level. Imagine Chicago’s proven frameworks for inspiring constructive community engagement will be taught by Bliss Browne, who pioneered them. They have inspired a global movement of social innovation on six continents. You will learn and apply effective strategies and tools for:

- Creating reliably constructive partnerships across differences of gender, age and culture.
- Strengthening questioning, listening and speaking skills.
- Shifting (and helping others shift) from deficit-based to strength based mindsets and communications, using Appreciative Inquiry, Asset based community development and Positive Asset Search.
- Understanding the impact of strength-based vs. deficit-based assessment of individuals and communities.
- Empowering constructive choices.

Come learn and practice creative ways to elicit vision and hope, build on strengths, and inspire constructive engagement and action!

About our plenary presenter . . . .

Bliss Browne, Founder and President of Imagine Chicago

Bliss Browne is founder and president of Imagine Chicago, a mother of three, an ordained Episcopal priest and a former Division Head of the First National Bank of Chicago where she was a corporate banker from 1975-1991. Her civic leadership positions have included serving as Chair of the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the MidAmerica Leadership Foundation and the Chicago Ethics Coalition; as Trustee of the Chicago Sunday Evening Club; and as an Advisory Board member of Public Allies, Archeworks, the Chicago Children's Choir, the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, and the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative. She has been on the Community Advisory boards of the Field Museum and the Chicago Historical Society, and the Alumni Council of Harvard Divinity School. She served on the Illinois Governor's Public-Private Child Care Council and the Presiding Bishop's Consultation on Reconciliation. She was the first female priest to preach at Westminster Abbey, in 1979, and has served in voluntary parish ministry for 30+ years. Bliss was a member of the Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement in America, convened by Robert Putnam at the Kennedy School of Harvard University, that recognized national innovators in developing social capital. She is an Associate of the Taos Institute and serves on the International Advisory Board of the PLUS network and the International Advisory Council of Communities of the Future (COTF).

Bliss is a graduate of Yale University (BA, History 1971), Harvard University (M.Div, Theology, 1974) and the Kellogg School of Management of Northwestern (MM, Finance, 1978.) She is a sought after keynote speaker, facilitator, consultant, coach and trainer nationally and internationally, in civic
engagement, leading and managing systemic change, collaboration, youth development and developing the generative capacity of communities. She does consulting work with business, church, health, government and community organizations. Bliss was a Rockefeller Fellow in 1974-75, a Kellogg National Leadership Fellow in 1989-91, and has received the Eureka Community Award (1995-1996), the Chicago Mercedes Mentor Award (1998), the Chicago Justice Pioneers Award (2003), and the IWA Chicago Woman Extraordinaire Award (2008). She is author of numerous journal articles, two books: *Ten Years of Imagination in Action*, a conceptual framework for imagination as a social movement and *Women Alive: A Legacy of Social Justice*, as well as a book entitled *Imagine: A Conversation with the Future* to be published by Taos Institute Publishing.

What is Imagine Chicago?

- A non-profit organization that has been working since 1992 to cultivate hope and civic engagement in a variety of cross cultural and intergenerational initiatives, projects and programs.
- A catalyst for creative connections.
- A trainer, facilitator and mentor of community visioning practices and strength based communications and community organizing processes.
- The inspiration for a self-organizing global Imagine movement on six continents.

Imagine Chicago helps harness imagination for public good, encouraging and equipping people to become engaged in imagining and creating hopeful futures for their families and communities through both discourse and action. Working in collaboration with local organizations--schools, faith communities, cultural institutions, businesses, and community groups--Imagine Chicago has initiated and facilitated dozens of creative partnerships in which people have worked together to understand, imagine and create the future they value. Imagine Chicago has built intergenerational and intercultural partnerships across well-established divides of race, income, culture and class. People previously disengaged or disaffected have found meaningful ways to contribute their gifts to the communities in which they live. Imagine Chicago has bet on young people as its core staff and as a catalyst for expanding community imagination and hope. Constructive experiences of difference have nurtured in a new generation of leaders a passion for the common good. A new set of strength- and arts-based tools and practices for liberating imagination, improving communications and helping communities listen for and organize collective visions and actions have emerged out of Imagine Chicago's work.

Imagine Chicago has served as a catalyst and connector, remaining a small organization with many partners. Each year, individuals and organizations have worked with Imagine Chicago on initiatives that invite civic reflection about the city, link communities, and stimulate ideas for collaborative action. The development projects have been funded separately, with each developing capacity to continue the process of civic innovation. From 1992-2001, Imagine Chicago designed and managed small and large scale civic programs in Chicago focused on renewing public education, revitalizing civic commitment, developing and connecting community leaders, and linking spirituality and public life. Extensive program curriculum archives are available from those projects on this website: http://imaginechicago.org/