

March 22, 2012

Herron's an exemplar in new book, *Designing for Social Change*

IUPUI's Herron School of Art and Design became an early adopter of "designing for the greater good," to provide real-world experiences and professional practice for its students. In its graduate degree program in visual communication, which has had only three graduating classes, students have produced dozens of case studies where they and their faculty mentors have developed workable solutions for real community challenges.

One such case is featured in the new book, *Designing for Social Change*, published by Princeton Architectural Press. Its author, Andrew Shea, is design director at the New York Academy of Art and an adjunct faculty member of the Parsons New School for Design. His ten-point primer of community engagement strategies for graphic designers is illustrated with 20 case studies from hotbeds of design thinking around the country, including Herron. Herron's nine month project with the Hawthorne Community Center in Indianapolis is an exemplar of point nine: "Give Communities Ownership."

The 85-year old, west-side center evolves to serve the changing needs of the community. The board of directors and staff turned to 11 Herron students and their team leaders, Associate Professor Young-Bok Hong and Adrienne Dye (M.F.A. in Visual Communication, '10), to help develop the center's next long-range plans.

Students had to reach out to a community almost entirely composed of immigrants who were suspicious of outsiders inquiring about their lives. Visual tools went a long way toward overcoming language barriers.

Student Brian Crain said the group went in believing that "clients are the experts who can best articulate their own experiences." The team packaged its recommendations in a master binder that the center can reference and implement over time. Ideas included:

- Augmenting after-school programming to teach children about family activities that can improve their parents' English skills
- Developing a "living legacy" program that could increase the variety in a senior citizen's day and encourage their opportunities to talk about the past

According to the book, Hawthorne Center administrators were "extremely happy" with the students' services.



Hawthorne Center long-range plan
Photo credit: Herron Staff

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Herron Communication Design Specialist Marshall Jones said, “The inclusion of the Hawthorne Project in *Designing for Social Change* is an acknowledgement of Herron’s contribution to this relatively young field. The fact that we’re listed among so many respected designers and design schools demonstrates Herron’s position within the leading edge of social design.”

Visual Communication Department Chair Eva Roberts said, “We are deeply honored to have our work in social design recognized. Designers have long sought to make a positive difference in the world, but the discipline is shifting and expanding. When stake holders are included in the design process, they are empowered to imagine what is possible, what is sustainable and to seek their own solutions. Herron students graduate with an understanding of design thinking and processes that will allow them to take leadership roles and to practice design in a way that fuels innovation across all sectors from social organizations and non-profits to government and corporations.”

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