



YDR Opinion: Merger will boost YorkCounts

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For years, YorkCounts has been preaching regionalization in our community - and rightly so.

Now it's practicing that philosophy by joining with the York County Community Foundation.

The move will allow the group to take advantage of the foundation's operational expertise and financial resources so it can focus more energy on community initiatives like the Metro York Police study and the York Academy charter school.

The change will also allow the foundation to take a more activist role in the community - an effort that has already begun with the YorIT grant-giving competition.

This will be a positive move if both organizations are strengthened and empowered.

YorkCounts has done some outstanding work for our community over the years.

It began by compiling and publishing statistical indicators of our community that helped our leaders focus on and solve problems.

The group's Metro York initiative rightly focused on fostering consolidation and cooperation among local government bodies.

Last year, YorkCounts sponsored a community forum on child abuse issues raised by a York Daily Record/Sunday News documentary video on the tragic death of Darisabel Baez.

YorkCounts was already doing good work. But it can do even more by operating under the umbrella of the foundation, said Eric Menzer, chairman of the foundation's board (and past president of the YorkCounts board), by taking advantage of economies of scale and allowing the foundation to expand its role in the community.

Mr. Menzer said the moves are patterned after the Baltimore Community Foundation, which moved beyond its traditional role of managing endowments and grants and worked actively to make Baltimore a

better place.

We've already seen a small example of that recently with the York County Community Foundation creating an endowment for the city's beloved steam whistle Christmas concert. That unique event was in danger of extinction for lack of funding.

Now, through the foundation, it will be funded to ensure the annual concerts continue well into the future.

Rather than sitting back and waiting for someone else to do something, the foundation took the lead and made things happen.

The merger with YorkCounts offers the opportunity to do more positive things. The foundation is basically taking the problem of fundraising off YorkCounts' back so it can focus on action.

The downside of this shakeup is the loss of two YorkCounts staffers who have worked hard to make York a better place: Director James DeBord and his assistant, Dan Fink. Instead, Jane Conover will assume operational duties, assisted by foundation staffers and directed by the YorkCounts board. That puts the effort in capable hands, as Ms. Conover did outstanding community work when she was with the YWCA.

But we'll miss Mr. DeBord and Mr. Fink, as they were responsive and proactive in setting up community programs.

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