



PHOTO BY DYLAN EDGEELL

Using the famous photo astronaut Buzz Aldrin shot of his footprint on the moon during the Apollo 11 mission, John Carroll encouraged CDI 2022 participants to collaborate and create bold “moon missions” in their communities.

Identifying Your Community’s Moon Mission

By Dylan Edgell

The University of Central Arkansas (UCA) Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) hosted the 36th Annual Community Development Institute (CDI) August 1-5 in Conway. Each year, community developers, elected officials and community leaders make the trip to UCA’s campus for a week of immersive training covering a wide range of topics related to community and economic development. CDI is a three-year training program consisting of one week of training per year. Graduates of CDI qualify to take the Professional Community and Economic Developer (PCED) exam for certification.

One of the special events during the week of CDI is the keynote presentation, which was delivered by John Carroll, the executive director of City Leadership, an organization that seeks to change the lives of Memphis, Tennessee, residents through building and developing leaders. City Leadership is the organization behind the Choose901, Teach901, Serve901 and Give901 campaigns that work to recruit talented individuals, develop leaders and organizations, and catalyze collaborative projects for the benefit of the city of Memphis.

Since starting these initiatives, City Leadership has provided leadership development assistance to 2,515 Memphians. Carroll shared this progressive spirit in his keynote address, emphasizing that everyone has the power to create broad and bold visions for the future of their communities.

Carroll referenced the United States government’s persistent efforts to win the Space Race in the 1960s. He urged CDI 2022 participants to identify their own “moon mission” in their community.

Carroll noted that the time between President John F. Kennedy’s speech announcing the moon mission on May 25, 1961, and Americans landing on the moon on July 20, 1969, was 2,979 days. When it was announced, the decision to go to the moon within a decade may have felt too ambitious, too big and too broad to be accomplished. It would require engineers learning and creating new technologies and experiencing multiple failures along the way. But accomplishing big and bold things requires big and bold thinking.

Carroll challenged CDI participants to look forward 2,979 days into the future and imagine what their community will look like on September 29, 2030. He


encouraged them to bring the energy and long-term vision required for the original moon mission into their work as community leaders.

This prompt raises important questions for the future of our communities as we move further into the 21st century. What plans do we need to make to build stronger communities, who do we need to bring to the table, and how will we engage and uplift the next generation of leaders?

Lonoke Mayor Trae Reed, a CDI 2022 participant, said he appreciated the future-focused keynote message, and he highlighted Carroll's emphasis on collaborative decision-making. "No one person can effect change by themselves," he said. "We all know it takes a village, which is why everyone in a position of influence needs a strong and reliable network."

Finding a moon mission in your community is a great way to spark interest, energy and action around

community and economic development initiatives. Not everyone in your community has this long-term vision so it's important that local leaders take the time to collaboratively create and set the vision, express what the future could look like and bring others into the fold to make it happen.

To learn more about John Carroll and City Leadership, visit www.cityleadership.org. CDI 2023 will be held July 31-August 4, 2023, at UCA. If you are interested in learning more about the Community Development Institute, visit www.uca.edu/cdi. 



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