

EPISODE 08

THE MISSING CONNECTION

The resource existed.
The Need existed.
They never met.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT — A SUSTAINABILITY SERIES

Clay Coleman | Community Mountain

August 2026

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Exhibit A: The Student

A child needs help reading. Three miles away lives a retired teacher who misses the classroom and would gladly tutor.

Need exists. Serve exists. Connection does not. The community appears to lack tutoring capacity — but does it?

Exhibit B: The Ride

A person gets a job, but the shift begins before public transportation arrives. Empty passenger seats travel near that workplace every morning.

Need exists. Serve capacity exists. Connection does not.

Stranded Capacity

Skills are unused. Buildings sit empty. Knowledge is not shared. Volunteers never get asked. Organizations solve similar problems without knowing one another.

How much apparent scarcity is actually disconnected abundance?

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Information Is Not Connection

A perfect directory is useful, but a phone number is not a relationship and a website link is not an outcome.

Connection should not be confused with information about the possibility of connection. The question is: did Need actually meet Serve?

The Referral That Disappeared

A referral may be made, but did anyone answer? Was the person eligible? Did transportation exist? Did Serve actually occur?

Communities can count referrals while people fall through the spaces between organizations.

Nobody Owns the Space Between

Organizations understandably focus on their missions. Human beings cross boundaries constantly; institutions often cannot.

Some of the most consequential community activity occurs in the spaces no single institution owns — the space between Need and Serve.

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Relationships Are Infrastructure

Human connectors carry community knowledge in their heads and relationships in their phones. Trust can transform information into connection.

Relational capacity may be part of a community's connective infrastructure.

The Network Begins to See

When connections become visible, patterns emerge: recurring transportation Needs, unused capacity, overwhelmed organizations, failed referrals and effective relationships.

Individual interactions begin producing Community Intelligence.

Connection Is Not the Hero

The connector does not feed, teach, employ or heal merely by making a match. Its role is humble: help existing capacity find where it can Serve.

The best connection may eventually no longer need the connector in the middle.

Food for Thought

- What if Need and Serve frequently exist in the same community without finding each other?
- What if some apparent scarcity is actually stranded capacity?
- What if a directory is useful but is not connection?
- What if relationships are community infrastructure?
- What if one of our greatest community resources is simply our ability to find one another?

NEXT EPISODE

EPISODE 09 - WHEN THE CONNECTOR BECOMES INDISPENSABLE

**The next question is already hiding inside the one we
just asked.**

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