

## ***Different Way of Seeing & Leading- Asset Building in Complex Systems***

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### **Butterfly Effect**

Butterfly Effects emerge when conditions are right for a small event to have a large impact or when large events fall flat.

#### **Observe the Butterfly Effect:**

Examples of Butterfly effects include situations where:

- A small tale turns into a huge story as it gets passed along from person to person. (This can apply to everything from a good restaurant review with a juicy quote in it to cyberbullying, where one mean remark can generate hundreds more.)
- Focusing on the strengths or talents of a person and sharing your perceptions with them can lead to changes in their self image and the way they interact with others.
- The concept of “Pay it Forward” is a butterfly effect.

#### **Decide when to Use the Concept of Butterfly Effects:**

- When you want to evaluate why an event had a surprising effect on the system.
- When you want to damp the impact of an event.
- When you want to amplify the impact of an event.

#### **Act –Triggering Butterfly Effects:**

- Help others understand what has happened when they are surprised and/or dismayed when something didn’t turn out the way they had hoped.
- Spend energy on small campaigns or projects that can spread rapidly as an alternative strategy to only relying on large events to move things forward.

#### **Examples from Asset-Building Settings:**

Butler County, OH carried out a media campaign that had butterfly effects. Instead of writing a whole series of articles themselves, leaders of the initiative, met with the managers of the local paper to discuss ways to broaden awareness of the Developmental Assets. Each reporter at the paper was assigned a number of assets and told to write one column per asset. The 40 articles wove in a personal interest story related to the asset and highlighted some place or organization that helped build that asset in Butler County. Response to the series was strong and led to a bound booklet of all the articles and a public “launch” of the booklet that included comments by the governor’s wife. In a meeting with the reporters after the launch, they indicated that their experiences had changed the way they covered local issues, and one said, when she covered school board issues, she now tried to include a student quote on the topic in her article.