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Lessons From the Ancients

The pyramid shape in our cover illustration inspired me to explore the connection between the pyramids and collaboration. How did people work together to build these magnificent monuments—a seemingly impossible task at the time? A few minutes' research on the Internet (NOVA Online) confirmed that the pyramids were indeed built by people (not aliens, as some claim), who together quarried and carved thousands of stones. In fact, archaeologist Mark Lehner suggests that the pyramids were a “national” project to which all the communities of Egypt, because of their beliefs, willingly contributed labor and food.

Lehner points out that such collaboration was also endemic to other ancient societies. The Incas built bridges of rope made from twine contributed by many villages. In Mesopotamia, clans worked together to build huge mud-brick city walls.

Today that spirit of community collaboration is being expressed by persons in Catholic health organizations who, likewise inspired by their beliefs, are working to achieve more together than they could on their own.

The authors of the articles on pages 22-30 have learned that, although collaboration may be as old as the pyramids, many organizations encounter difficulties as they get into the unfamiliar territory of promoting health and preventing disease through group effort. But the problems of working in unaccustomed ways can be solved with attention to, as Julia Weaver puts it, issues of “trust, turf, and time.” See the special section for a wealth of ideas for teaming effectively with new partners.

These organizations' efforts coincide with other collaborations inspired by *New Covenant*, an initiative that supports the Catholic health ministry through collaborative strategies. In this issue, our regular “Community Networks” section focuses on *New Covenant*-type collaboration among organizations in St.

Louis and Tucson, AZ (page 39). And on page 34, Darryl R.

Lippman and Markland G. Lloyd describe a cosponsorship arrangement that has helped congregations continue to serve their communities in five states.

I hope you find this issue of *Health Progress* a resource for information and networking (contact persons are mentioned throughout) as you hone your skills for improving your community's health by working with other organizations.

