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# MIDWEST LOCAL WIKIMANIA!

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Posted on *December 13, 2012* by *Brian Zelip* in *Brigade, Campaigns, Gov2.0, News*

Hi, I'm Brian. I lived in a cool neighborhood in Toledo, Ohio before coming to Champaign-Urbana for work and school at the University of Illinois. As a founding member of both [CUwiki.net](#) and [ToledoWiki.net](#), I'm in a good position to provide a brief sketch of these projects. Both Champaign-Urbana and Toledo have folks celebrating and supporting their community through LocalWiki – and each took part in the [Race for Reuse](#) campaign.

### CU WIKI

An informal group of people began coming together a year ago to discuss building a crowdsourced wiki website about Champaign-Urbana that anyone could add content to, even with minimum technical skills. We launched [CUWiki.net](#) in the spring using the [Local Wiki](#) platform. The next few months saw a small handful of users adding content and in the fall a Kate Williams' Community Informatics course at the university organized a semester's work around adding content to and drafting best practices for CU Wiki.

Our Race for Reuse campaign goal was to double our number of registered users. This pushed us to expand what was our almost singular focus at the time: increasing page content. With the campaign goal at our heels, some of us attended networking events and pitched the wiki to get others to create accounts. While a little tough, it proved to be important experience for stepping up our outreach game.

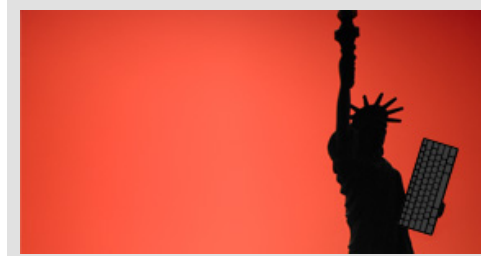
For our Race for Reuse event, we organized the Community Technology Forum. The aims were to facilitate public discourse around critical issues facing our community and to explore the role of CU Wiki in relation to these issues. On hand were local religious and government leaders and other community members who learned about and interrogated the ideas behind the site. The event was a success.



### TOLEDO WIKI

Toledo is packed with lots of creative people and good energy. As soon as we launched CU Wiki, I knew Toledo could benefit from something similar. I was still stuck at figuring how it'd work and who would run it when the Race for Reuse challenge was issued. This was the perfect opportunity. I purchased the domain name and got in touch with a few key Toledo cultural ambassadors. In a week and a half we organized (via Facebook) a massive turn out (60 people!) for our [Learn & Launch](#) event.

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The turn out was mostly a mix of artists, musicians, techies, families, and local business owners. A city councilman was also present, as well as an 8-year-old who asked questions and put up a wiki page about his school. The success of our Learn & Launch set the stage for **ToledoWiki** to gain legitimacy and momentum. In the short amount of time since, we've shot past our Race for Reuse campaign goal, a graphic designer contributed some logo design work, institutions like the Toledo

Symphony and the Metroparks have invested time into the site, and there has been talk within county government of feeding some of their data to the site.

## MIDWEST LOCALWIKI EVENT

While LocalWiki is being leveraged differently in Champaign-Urbana and Toledo, CfA brought a similar important value to both contexts— support, insight, and incentive. The national network of civic engagement 2.0 projects the Race For Reuse brought together has already branched off into useful discussion. I certainly anticipate continuing the conversation with other Racers and the Code for America staff who have been working with us.

Other active Midwest LocalWiki projects include **DetroitWiki.org** and **ArborWiki.org**. We're organizing a Midwest LocalWikimania at 2013's eChicago conference April 25-26 (<http://eChicago.illinois.edu>). Get in touch and join us!

Questions? Comments? Hit us up [@codeforamerica](#).

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