

Connecting Advocates Newsletter

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<https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net>

Uniting community members to transform our neighborhoods is at the heart of what we do.



Stronger Together

Voter Engagement Makes a Difference

Uniting Across Prince George's County

All of us can make a difference when it comes to electing County representatives that are ethical, that serve constituents, and that protect our communities. Elections have consequences and local elections are becoming more critical in keeping negative forces out of elected positions. Below are steps each of us can take to make a difference.

Step 1: Understand the impact of local representation

In Prince George's County, we have seen elected officials' unethical back-room deals attempt to keep constituent-focused candidates off the ballot. A majority of the County Council engineered a redistricting map that gerrymandered three quality candidates out of the districts where they had already begun campaigning. Communities across the County spoke out against the proposed redistricting, but the majority of the Council voted to go ahead with the plan. Ultimately, the gerrymandered map was struck down in multiple courts. However, had the redistricting been successful, developers would have had free reign to over-develop already crowded communities. The negative impact on quality-of-life would have been substantial.

Step 2: Find trusted sources of information

This may be the most difficult step! It isn't easy to know who is giving an accurate assessment and who is able to create an effectively deceptive message that sounds convincing. Skilled professional salespeople know how to craft an effective message. For example, our County Council tried to market their plan as being designed to increase representation for a particular ethnic group. In reality, the proposed map would have had the opposite effect.

To find a better source of information, look to people who are active in a community-based organization such as a homeowners association (HOA), a civic organization, a local school board or PTA board, a church leadership team, and/or service organizations. Attend a meeting and listen- it will become clear who is working in the best interest of the community.

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Please visit our
web site at:
<https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net>

Contact Us At:
CultivatingCommunityConn@gmail.com



What Do You Think?

Cultivating Community Connections would like to know about the people in your community that are making a difference. Tell us who they are and what they are doing. Email us at:

CultivatingCommunityConn@gmail.com

Our Leadership Team

Carol Jenkins- founder

Jeff Jenkins- co-founder

Melissa Daston- *Movers and Shakers* coordinator

Carol Relitz- web administrator

Thank you for supporting CCC's efforts to strengthen communities.

Step 3: Get informed

Most community leaders are happy to share their opinions. When talking about elections, most community leaders won't be able to make public statements regarding candidates, but they are very willing to do so in one-on-one conversations. Ask questions like: Which local candidates do you think will serve constituents- not special interest? What evidence do you have that shows this?

Step 4: Reach out to others in your family

Voting matters and our family members are far more likely to vote because of role models in their own family than for any other reason. Let family members know **why** you think voting is important. Too many people don't vote in local and state elections. Family conversations about the importance of local and state elections are likely to be less heated than conversations about national politics, and, therefore, these conversations are highly effective. Particularly here in the D.C. Metro area, party affiliation isn't the issue, so it is easier to focus on quality-of-life issues. By getting family members in the habit of voting in **all** elections, we can do a lot to insure the health of our democracy.

Going Further- Extending Our Reach

Something positive has come out of the fight to stop unethical gerrymandering in Prince George's County. While individual communities were organizing letter writing campaigns and testifying at Council meetings, advocates realized the need to work together. It isn't enough to have a minority of an elected body representing the best interests of a community. We need to have a clear majority.

There are many community-based organizations and local political organizations that advocate for constituents. Now, leaders from these organizations are starting to talk to each other. Together, we are looking to build sufficient support for candidates who can defeat special-interest/big-money backed candidates.

In order to build enough grassroots support, it is going to be necessary for everyone to recognize where they have connections to other districts, and then reach out to those connections. For example, a neighbor or friend might attend a church that has members in different areas of the County. If so, they might be willing to talk up a candidate to one or two other people. One conversation can turn into multiple votes. Giving one person the information about Candidate XYZ who is trying to stop over-development in this community, can help spread the word to their family members and friends.

SPREAD THE WORD PLANNING AHEAD TO...

