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C-Cultivating C-Community C-Connections

* Encouraging Community Involvement
* Linking Communities to Resources



<https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net>

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Please visit our web site at:

<https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net>

Contact Us At:

CultivatingCommunityConn@gmail.com



Movers and Shakers (Prince George's County)

Signs of a Thriving Community Organization

An often heard concern of many community groups is, "How do we get more people involved?" or, "How do we reach more people?" These two questions are signs of a healthy organization. Without asking these two questions, an organization cannot grow, cannot reach more people, and, without seeking that growth, will cease to thrive. Let's celebrate our community leaders that are asking the right questions and are continuing to look for more ways to serve community members.

While we are celebrating a desire to grow, it is equally important to recognize all that an organization is doing already to reach out, especially to those people who don't give us feedback. It is easy to assume that the people we don't hear from don't really care, but reality can be very different. Recognizing what might be happening can bolster the spirits of our dedicated volunteers, and more importantly, can help us reach out to the very people that need us the most. It is worthy of recognition that an organization has a goal that benefits all members of the community. It is also worthy of recognition that leadership evaluates progress towards meeting that goal. When evaluating that progress, we need to think about who might also be benefiting from our efforts, but not providing any feedback. In other words, without recognizing who is already benefitting, organizational leadership might conclude that current practices aren't working and abandon something that is very useful. So, in assessing effectiveness, start by keeping good things going, even when modifying slightly to meet current needs.

With on-going successes in place, many community groups have expressed a desire to reach out to non-English speakers. The community may have residents from a wide variety of non-English speaking countries and it is a challenge to establish meaningful connections with all these residents. One group started by trying to meet the needs of the most prevalent language, Spanish. Let's take a look at two of their solutions in order to analyze if the outreach is worth continuing.

Goal: To reach out to non-English speaking residents

Outreach Tried	Implementation	Result	Questions Asked
Translate key portions of the community newsletter (or informational materials) to the majority language, which is Spanish.	A trusted community member provided academically correct translations for publication	No positive or negative feedback from community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is this worth continuing?• Was there a way for the target audience to provide feedback?
Welcome new residents by having a member of the board bring informational materials and a small gift. When possible, send a bilingual board member.	A team of board members coordinates the assembly and distribution of gift baskets.	New residents seem grateful. There is no increase in participation and no additional feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is this worth continuing?• What does this gesture mean to the recipient?

Asking the right questions is key to deciding on a course of action. Both of the solutions above are worthwhile, but they also require a lot of time and effort on behalf of volunteers. So what additional questions would be useful? (Continued on page 2)



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

In memory of Melissa Daston-
Movers and Shakers past president

Carol Relitz- web administrator

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

Silent Community Members (Continued from page 1)

As mentioned above, the examples are from a real community. And, even when asking for feedback, there was very little. As a result, leadership continues to wonder if the outreach should continue. Perhaps a useful question to ask would be, "Is what we are doing to reach out actually providing under-served members of our community any benefits? If so, what benefits? How do we know?" In this case, non-English speakers might not be comfortable communicating directly with leadership. Or they might not realize that their opinion matters. But is the lack of feedback unique to non-English speakers? After all, the vast majority of community members don't provide feedback because they are more involved with their own priorities. Community leaders rarely hear feedback from most English-speaking residents, so for residents with a language barrier there is even less of a chance they will respond to surveys or write reviews.

How can we get a better connection with all residents? **The most meaningful connections and the best feedback is often in one-on-one conversations.** Using one actual block of houses as an example, out of 12 houses, only one family attends meetings or most community events. The other 11 households have 11 different reasons for not participating, despite getting the information. Some of these non-participants have told the one family that attends that they were interested and they hoped to attend in the future. And, therein lies the key: we don't know how many people are interested and appreciate the effort. So much of what we do is noticed and word will get around, word will spread. We are showing that our communities care about all residents and that we are here to serve everyone, not just a select few. When we keep doing what is right rather than just what is easy, we are making a difference in the over-all health and safety of the people we serve.

Ideas for Reaching Out to All Members of Our Communities

In our October newsletter we looked at how some communities are reaching out to at-risk residents as a research-based violence prevention strategy. If you missed that edition of our newsletter, you can find it on our web site: [CCC-Newsletter](#)

Beyond intervention strategies for identified at-risk groups, as we work to form meaningful relationships with all community members, here are some of the ways our communities are currently connecting with residents:

Neighborhood Watch

Voter Information: Why voting is important
Candidate Forum

National Night Out

Summer Movies

Participating in PTA/PTO Board Meetings and Events

Community Yard Sale or Craft Fair

Newsletter, Discussion Boards, Email Blasts, Social Media

Informational Meetings

Holiday Celebrations

We'd love to hear from your community. If your community has a successful activity or strategy, please let us know at: CultivatingCommunityConn@gmail.com



Thank you to all of the volunteers who work so hard to serve their communities!

A special thank you goes out to the members of Cultivating Community Connections and Movers and Shakers. You are making a difference every day. Thank you for all of your efforts and your support!

Check Out Our Useful Resource on CCC's Web Site

Please check our web site for future newsletters and other updates:

<https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net>

A big "Thank you!" to our web master, Carol Relitz, for all of her work on the CCC web site!!

