

Actions That Foster A Sense of Community

Strong individuals and families are critical, but not enough. Individuals and families need and rely on others for day-to-day survival, food, shelter. These "others" are the community. Our country is really a community of communities. A sense of community and of belonging is something most of us need and want - but which I believe is missing for many of us.

In today's world where both parents often work, where technology allows us to communicate without leaving the house, where crime has limited our outside activities, where we travel and are a mobile society and where communities are more diverse, a sense of community is not as easy to come by as it used to be. Here are some actions that can help create a better sense of community and let each other know that we are all in this together.

Citizen Actions

1. [Befriend a neighbor who is elderly - invite them to dinner, bring over a dessert, or offer to take them shopping or on an outing.](#)
2. [Donate blood.](#)
3. [Extend small courtesies to individuals of 'difference'.](#)
4. [Get to know your neighbors.](#)
5. [Give away things you don't use.](#)
6. [Keep a trash bag in your car.](#)
7. [Make a friend with someone from another race/ethnicity.](#)
8. [Participate in organ donor program.](#)
9. [Perform a "random act of kindness".](#)
10. [Pick up a piece of trash each day.](#)
11. [Recycle.](#)
12. [Register to be a bone marrow donor.](#)
13. [Start a neighborhood watch program.](#)
14. [Start a tradition in your neighborhood of having an annual "pot luck".](#)

15. [Stop to help a bicyclist or driver in need.](#)
16. [Visit churches, restaurants, stores and parks located in ethnic neighborhoods different than your own to discover the richness of American culture.](#)
17. [Volunteer.](#)
18. [Watch America's Most Wanted.](#)



**Reader Submitted
Actions**

Befriend a Neighbor Who is Elderly - Invite Them to Dinner, Bring Over a Dessert, Offer to Take Them Shopping or On an Outing



Helping each other is what a community is all about. Often as we get older, we can use help or appreciate company. In today's society, it's not as likely as it used to be that families and relatives live near each other.



Readers' Stories

Donate Blood



Every day approximately xxxx Americans need, and receive, xxx,xxx pints of blood - and the need is growing because of medical advances and an aging population. For example, a liver transplant, increasingly routine as more and more hepatitis C victims become sick with liver cancer, can use up to 100 pints per day. Those inflicted with Sickle Cell Anemia require a transfusion every three to four weeks.

Donating a pint of blood can save up to three lives. "When you give blood, it's separated into three components.

1. Red blood cells are taken out, for people with anemia or low blood count due to blood loss.
2. Platelets are transfused to those with low platelet count, such as leukemia patients.
3. Plasma is given to people with various clotting problems - those who've had transfusions, for example.

Most of the nation's blood supply comes from blood donated from other Americans. About 48% of eligible Americans have never given blood. Periodically donating a pint of our own blood is a small gift most of us can easily give to ensure an adequate supply. There are few things that are so easy to do and yet which can have such a profound impact. Blood, of course, is literally the "life blood" for those in need.

In order to give blood, you must be at least 17 years and weigh at least 110 pounds. You can give blood every 2 months. The actual drawing of blood takes about 10 minutes. You can give blood at:

- 1) for-profit blood banks,
- 2) [American Red Cross](#) blood bank centers,
- 3) many medical facilities and
- 4) [America's Blood Centers](#) (ABC) is the national network of non-profit, independent community blood centers that collect almost half (47%) of the U.S. blood supply. Together ABC members serve over 125 million people in 46 states at more than 450 blood donation sites. They also provide more diagnostic and therapeutic services than any other U.S. blood organization.

Consider giving blood with your child when they reach the age of 17 - it may help start a lifelong habit of donating. Also giving blood on your birthday can make it even more special.



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Readers' Stories



We live in a country with more diversity, of every kind, than any other nation on earth. It's one of our greatest strengths. It's also one of our greatest challenges. Diversity implies differences and differences often create uncertainty. Additionally, many culturally diverse groups have a history of conflict with one another - a history of fact, a history of perception and a history of innuendo. So I think it particularly important that when each of us encounters someone different from ourselves (i.e. an "individual of difference"), that we go out of our way to show that individual that they are on equal footing with us, that we respect them, etc.



Yes, we should do this to everyone, but when two individuals of similarity interact, there usually isn't that potential tension of difference. However, when we encounter someone of difference on a day-to-day basis, we go out of our way to:

- hold the door for them,
- look at them and say hello,
- give them the right of way,



More Examples



Readers' Stories



As we become a more global and mobile nation, we are also becoming a more transient nation. The classic notion of community withis changing. Not long ago when one moved into a neighborhood, they were formally welcomed by an organization called the Welcome Wagon. The Welcome Wagon wouldIn that era, we knew our neighbors. In today's fast-paced world, we often don't know our neighbors. It helps develop a sense of community.

We are part of a society. Meeting you neighbors helps reinforce this and helps us realize of the importance. It is a step in becoming part of society. We need to be there for each other. Share phone numbers.



Readers' Stories

Give Away Things You Don't Use



Many of us have a lot of things we rarely, if ever, use. Months and years go by and these things sit in our closets and garages, not used.

Clothes, furniture, sporting good, kitchenware and utensils, pictures, etc.

Giving away things you don't use has a lot of advantages:

- it can simplify your life and free up space
- it reduces the number of natural resources we, as a nation, must use to sustain our life style,
- removing clutter can free your energy and allow you to focus on your life's work,
- it helps other people by allowing them to acquire things they couldn't afford otherwise and



You may be able to deduct a part of the value of these items on ones tax return.



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More Examples



Readers' Stories

Keep a Trash Bag in Your Car



Throwing or dumping ones trash (e.g. paper, food, etc.) on the ground or into the water says to others that you don't care about them. It's not only an eyesore, but trash can be unsanitary and potentially harm wildlife.

Keep some plastic shopping bags in your glove compartment for those times when you need a trash bag. They are easy to store, are somewhat moisture proof and have handles.

Make a Friend with Someone from Another Race/Ethnicity



While we are basically all the same - human beings made up of certain chemical elements, we are all different like individual snowflakes. Unfortunately

As parents, one way to send kids to a multi-cultural camp.

Knowing someone of from a different culture lets us decide for ourselves about each individual and helps adjust our perceptions and generalizations.

Need to go out of our way to do this something, since we often tend to group in ghettos.



Readers' Stories

Participate in Organ Donor Program



The organ donor program is a national program for donating all or part of ones body upon ones death. Donated organs and tissue are given either to other individuals or to research. If you sign up (see below) and then die, then your family is first asked to sign a consent form. Then your body is can still be cremated or buried.

Each day about 57 individuals receive an organ transplant - the good news. Each day about 13 other individuals die because not enough organs are available - the bad news. Needless to say, there is a great need for various organs by individuals who....and a need for organs and other body parts by researchers. Understandably, organ donation is an uncomfortable subject for many of us - probably in part because we don't understand what it means to die and it's hard to imagine.

First, anyone can indicate her or his intent to donate. Person's under 18 must have their parent's or guardian's consent. Medical suitability for donation is determined at the time of death.

One typically indicates her or his interest be a donor on their driver's license. Often, a donor card is included as part of a state's drivers license renewal. A small card is filled out and kept with ones drivers license. In California, an "organ donor" sticker is included so the sticker can be put onto the license. Here is what the organ donor material that comes with the California driver's license renewal material.



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Readers' Stories

Perform a "random act of kindness"



Good deeds are the best and most pure when the persons you do them for doesn't know who you are.

1. Put a quarter in a parking meter that has expired and not received a ticket!
2. Let someone in front of you when the traffic is heavy.
3. Help someone with her or his luggage in an airport or airplane.
4. Throw you neighbor's morning paper closer to their door.
5. Share your newspaper with someone else on a plane
6. Turn in lost items - hang items dropped on a path where others people can see them.
7. Leave magazines on plane for others to enjoy - remove the address label.
8. Put mis-delivered mail back in your mailbox with a note to the post office indicating the mail was mis-delivered.

And how does one repay an act of kindness? In a June 2001 [Reader's Digest](#) article, Julia Alvarez describes the many acts of kindness she witnessed and received during an emergency landing caused because her flight was hit by lightning and lost one of its engines. And now when she hears an airplane, she is reminded of the flight and wishes she could pay them back. Remembering how her aisle mate reached out to hold her hand and how she then reached to hold the hand of the high school student next to her, she feels struck by lightning all over again as she realizes that "*the point is not to pay back kindness, but to pass it on.*"

The movie Pay It Forward starring



More Examples



Readers' Stories

Pick Up a Piece of Trash Each Day



I can not prove it, but would bet the house that individuals function better and treat others better in a clean environment, not only enhances quality of life but the value of property.

Why should we pick up someone else's trash - keeps our environment clean.

Picking up a piece of trash given other permission to do the same.

Shows other that you are willing to help keep their world/environment clean. It's a small gift to others..



Doing something is an act of leadership. Seeing someone else pick up a piece of trash can motivate others to do the same. It sort of gives them permission.

Gives one feeling of doing something beyond themselves

Clean environment enhances natural beauty of surroundings - no trash to take away

Clean environment sets expectation of higher behavior

If you go for a walk or take a picnic, take a plastic shopping bag. You can actually use the plastic bag to pick up the trash with if you doesn't want to touch the trash.

In some states, the "Highway Department" allows organizations be responsible for keeping portions of a highway clean and for doing that the organizations name gets posted on a sign on the highway. Adopt-A-Highway Liter Control program.

Recycle



For each thing we throw away and for each thing that we have but don't use, more of this country's and this planet's natural resources must be used - more trees cut down, more animals raised and slaughtered, more water resources depleted, more oil and minerals extracted., - and while some of these natural resources do get replenished, it takes a long long time.

When we don't properly recycle things like motor oil we do tremendous damage to our drinking water and probably without knowing it. One gallon of used oil can pollute 1 million gallons of drinking water!

Recycling stuff you throw away means ...have consumed

Participate in city recycling programs

Return bottles/plastic to store (some states have redemption fees)

"" "" to recycle vending machines

Breakdown into raw materials

Recycling stuff you don't use anymore means

The amount of stuff (glass, cans, paper, plastics) we use (sometimes not even used) and throw away is phenomenal and a waste. If you are convinced based on your experience, visit a garbage dump. For me, it's scary and sad to see so much stuff thrown away, buried or burnt.

Prevent waste by splitting entrees at restaurants - many restaurants provide portions

In today's world, we have capacity to recycle and reuse much of the materials we throw away - including water. Through this partnership for the environment,



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More Examples

Register to Be a Bone Marrow Donor



Here's an opportunity to give of yourself so that someone else might have a better shot at living.

A bone marrow transplant offers people with cancer or certain blood diseases, such as leukemia, a meaningful chance for a cure. A simple blood test administered through a donation center can determine if you're a suitable match. You must be between the ages of 18 and 60 and in good general health.

National Marrow Donor Day is Saturday, February 12, but you can donate at any time. To arrange to be tested, contact the NMDP donor center nearest you at 1-800-MARROW2.



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Readers' Stories



Readers' Stories



Readers' Stories



Of course you need to use judgment when doing this because of safety concerns, but plenty of opportunities arise to help a driver or bicyclist in need. There are many ways we can help:

- Call someone for them
- Bring them gas
- Help diagnose a problem or make a repair

When a nation gets to the point where its people don't assist others in need, that nation is in trouble - we are close to that point. The following story appeared in USA Today on July 20, 1990.

Girl's roadside ordeal stuns Italy

All of Italy seems horrified by the tragic story of 6-year-old Vanessa Moretti's search for help for her dying father.

The child was riding with her father, Marco Moretti, 33, on the way from their home near Florence to the beach town of Monte Argentario on Saturday to begin a vacation.

Moretti had a heart attack as the car entered a tunnel on the "Sun Highway," a main road to central Italy's beaches. Before collapsing, he pulled over and the girl got out to seek help.

Hundreds of people beginning their own vacations passed as she stumbled along. She ran into a guard rail and fell into roadside branches.

Scratched, crying and bleeding, she walked more than a mile and spent a half-hour on the side of the road before any passing drivers stopped.

The story has outraged many Italians, who fear it shows they have become selfish and indifferent as their economy has prospered.

"We have begun to show the cold, glacial face that even a few years ago we reproached other, richer countries for having" columnist Sabin Acquaviva wrote in Milan's daily *Corriere della Sera*.

"Because we have inculcated in people the philosophy of well-being, we have created egoist, consumers, people who ultimately are alone and unhappy," he wrote.

Marco Moretti was buried Monday in his hometown of Pontassieve, Vaness

was staying with relatives.

And we are supposed to living in such prosperous times.



Readers' Stories

Visit Churches, Restaurants, Stores and Parks Located in Ethnic Neighborhoods Different than Your Own to Discover the Richness of American Culture



Readers' Stories





President Clinton spearheaded creation of AmeriCorps, a program designed "to give young Americans the opportunity to earn money for college tuition by dedicating themselves to two years of service in public school, nursing homes or charitable institutions." On one of AmeriCorps anniversaries, President Clinton challenged young people "to dedicate a year or two of your lives to a cause larger than yourselves. 0



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Readers' Stories

Watch "America's Most Wanted"



Watch "[America's Most Wanted](#)" Saturday evening at 9 p.m. on FOX. The program has had great success in using the medium of TV to locate and apprehend criminals who have eluded law enforcement. Over 600 of the country's most dangerous criminals have been apprehended as a result of the show. Criminals have been known to turn themselves in after seeing their "story" on the program.



SAT. 9 PM FOX TV



Readers' Stories

Additional Reader-submitted "Community Actions" Actions

When one gets catalogues that they don't want, they can call their 800 number and request that catalogues not be sent in the future.

The amount of wasted paper is terrible. I have just called 8 companies to cancel their catalogues!

Susan Loudenslager - Tennessee

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