

Neighbors All: Creating Community One Block At A Time



OUR EXPERIENCE
**Mayor's Committee of
Neighborhood Services
North Riverside, Illinois**

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CONTACT US

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For further information or questions, please call or email our coordinator--Carol Spale at 708-447-4932 or carriver@sbcglobal.net

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This Document was Written and Printed in 2011

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

We are very proud of our Neighborhood Services organization. The idea for the program came from the late North Riverside resident Gary Wilt. Starting the program was a lot easier than I thought it would be because we found another resident, Carol Spale, to be our organizer and program coordinator. Carol, in spite of her own family concerns, manages to find the time and energy to watch over both her neighbors and fellow citizens.

We have a very dedicated group of people in the Neighborhood Services organization. The Village of North Riverside has been an excellent support tool for our organization. With the power of the Village, we can go to the highest level of government and accomplish things that the average person cannot. The combination of our caring people in Neighborhood Services and the inherent power of the Village of North Riverside is what makes this program work. We work together very closely and we rely upon each other to accomplish what we need to do. People and Government can work together for a single goal when it involves helping others and that is exactly what we do.

Former Mayor of North Riverside, Illinois Richard N. Scheck

Comments From Other Persons

North Riverside Current Mayor--Kenneth Krochmal

I am proud to say that the Neighborhood Services committee is part of the Village of North Riverside. It's truly a one of a kind committee. Neighbors go out of their way to help each other. Sometimes this help comes anonymously, never with any recognition. It's as though this committee is made up of angels who know when someone needs something, whether it's a hot meal, a ride to the doctor, a little cheer, or an ear to listen. This committee is a great asset to the Village of North Riverside. It helps make us the small community with a big heart.

North Riverside Village Administrator--Guy Belmonte

The Neighborhood Services Program is one of the most valuable programs we have here in the Village of North Riverside. It is heartwarming to see neighbors helping neighbors.

North Riverside Director of Recreation--Sue Frampton

We get numerous calls from residents seeking various types of assistance and I can always count on Neighborhood Services to reach out and help them. Thank you!

North Riverside former Director of Recreation--Penny Devin

Throughout my career I have worked in numerous towns and villages, and North Riverside is by far the most caring, concerned and compassionate community because of their Neighborhood Services program.

Editor/Publisher, Neighbors Magazine—Tina Valentino

I attended the anniversary of the Neighborhood Services Committee which paid tribute to the many neighborhood angels who have created--one random act of kindness at a time for almost 20 years--a genuine sense of extended family. They are an "army of angels," knocking on doors, sharing meals, lending a hand, listening and even loving their enemies in a society where good Samaritans are sometimes impossible to find. I am in awe of this group and find it exceedingly difficult to explain its magnanimity to others. God bless Rich Scheck and Carol Spale and all those who have impacted lives one garden tomato, one shovel of snow, one caring call and one hug at a time.

This Manual Is Dedicated To:

- Those block captains, in heaven and on earth, who spent their lives helping their neighbors, and our former Mayor Richard Scheck, whose openness allowed this program to develop in our town. See the list of their names on the next pages.
- The three liaisons from the village who helped develop this program with their innovative ideas-- Blanca, Penny, and Sue. Without these three individuals, we would not have been able to go ahead with the Mayor's Committee of Neighborhood Services or have known how to navigate the channels in the village.
- Lori, John, Allan, Sue and Paula whose technical skills helped us publish this manual.



MEMBERS OF THE MAYOR'S COMMITTEE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

THOSE IN CAPITALS ARE CURRENT MEMBERS

When members retire or move, they usually ask someone on the block, whom they know well, to take their place.

NICK ALBACHARA
JOHN BORK
Brian Basek
Gina and Tom Bojovic
Sam Buonomo
Phil Brokenshire
Melinda and Ken Brom
Patrick Carolan
Mary Cashin
Sally Cesal
Fran Cvetezar
MATT DECOSOLA
MARK & JOANNE EGGER
George and Phyllis
Endriukaitis
KATHRYN FONTANA
Mary Fedorski
Jack Fenton
Maureen Ferriter
Doreen Fliger
Ken Pietro
Casey Kuczek
Kay Subaitis
Julie Kysela
Theresa Polic
Dan Pinkos
Harriet Nieman
Karen Kutt
Greg and Terry Schaefer
Debra D'Attomo
Valerie Pettrone
Karen DalPorto
Fred Orehek
Julie Kysela
Irene Jecmen
Margaret Harris
Ann Nazimek
Jeanne Fornari

Kathy Flowers
BOB GERSTNER
Vince Gonzalez
Pearl Grosse
JUDY HANNON
Margaret Harris
CINDY HICKEY
Irene Jecmen
Marie Kelly
Gene and Joanne Koszala
WENDY KRAL
KEN KROCHMAL
Sandy Lid
Fan Liu
Barbara Mc Keag
Kathy Nelson
Harriet Niemann
Debra Nieminski
Jim Orth
Bonnie Pekarek
Theresa Polic
FRANK VESELAK
PATTI JO MEYER
Jeanette Kubisztal
Ann Santos
Liz Polhemus
Beth Ritacca
MARY ANN RIVERA
Margaret Rowley
ROSE SANTORO
JOAN SARGENT
Rich Skulina
Trent Stahnke
Roy Svoboda
Nanci Tanney
Angela Travaglio
Rose Urani
Gary Wittbrodt
Mary Beth Varak
Diane Vitrungs

Nancy Vesecky
John Zenger
JULIE O'BRIEN
MYRA ZAK
JOAN HALVEY
CINDY SAJATOVIC
SHERI GABINO
Michelle Martinis
Barbara Silvestri
STEVE BOGDAN
Johnny Chauvet
P.J. FOLZ
PAUL CORNELIUS
LIZ DUREC
TERESE CROWLEY
MAUREEN GRUBER
CAROL O'MEARA
EILEEN WILD
THERESE KOURIM
Wendy Winkler
ELIZABETH PEREZ
Gloria Pennachhio
JILL CANNIZZO
JOANNE FENTON
DANIELLE SVESTKA
CHERYL ANTOS
SHARON VASSOS
Kathy Laugello
DEBBIE DOMINGUEZ
JIM COPP
MELODY HAMER
JANET BRAUN
Allan Spale
RENEE AND FLAVIO CIRPIANI
DAVID ROSS
GERI COZZI
KATHRYN RYDZ
DENISE POMEY
Barb Piekarski
Tom Prapor
DEBBIE CZAJKA
MARIE WOZNIAK
Maureen Ferriter
SHERRI STAHNKE
ROSE MICELI
JASON BIANCO
DINA WITKEN

Jeri Lang
Tracey and Tim Schommer
TONY AND JOAN
KWIATKOWSKI
JULIE AND JOHN RYAN
LINDA SEDLAK
DENISE CHIAPPETTA
MARIA REYES
MARGARET HASSE
MARLENE DESANTIS
DAVID TOMALIS
BARBARA GURSKI
EDWIN DULIK
JANE KASAL
MARIA AND RON BUCZEK
PETER GARZA
ANDREW ROSA
KATHY RANIERI
DIANNE COSENTINO
COLETTA BEHRENDT
FRANK AND CAROL SPALE
DICK AND KAY VABRO
KEN ROULEAU
SUE WILLOUGHBY
CARLENE O'BRIEN
KAREN ARDNT
KAREN QUINN
JOHN AND ANGEL GAVIN
Noreen Keunster
JOANNE GUASTELLA
ERNIE HALVERSON
WENDY KRAL
Ann Nazimek
SUE SKRYD
WILMA AND ED PECKA
HELEN IPPOLITO
PATTI JO MEYER
JOHN MCGOLDRICK
SUE SKYRD
JEANINE WATYLYK
LINO COZZONE

**In Memory of Members of
Neighborhood
Services Who are Deceased**

Eleanore Gajkowski
Bob Kutt
Bill Cech
Ed Herlihy
Pat Collins
Casey Kuczek
Emilie Ucherek
Marge Sedlacek
Alice Kopacek
Alberta Filip
Ernie Czetezar
Ray Hickey
Gary Wilt
Rudy Dorner
Winnie Kruzic
Art Horne
Trudy Lee
Pat Steichmann
Joe Mitchell
Larry Kehl
Lou Gambino
Lorrayne Vlastnik
Millie Fako
Rich Olson
Marge Sedlacek
Peter Onni
Dorothy Svoboda

Honorary Captains

Betty Scheck
Helen Kedmenec
Viola Jansky

PROLOGUE

This manual is a response to the many people who have asked our former Mayor and myself how to begin a program similar to the Mayor's Committee of Neighborhood Services in their towns, schools, churches or businesses.

The book provides a step-by-step approach based on a simple, four-point program proposed by Chiara Lubich, the late foundress of the Focolare Movement, who offered it as a gift to people all over the world.

This initiative, which we call "the art of caring," is not a tool for discussion or analysis. It is a guideline for action, to be put into practice by two or more people who are dedicated to making a positive contribution in whatever place they find themselves.

This manual may be different from those manuals you are accustomed to reading. The structure and mechanics of our program is presented only after the points of the art of caring. After each point, there are experiences from life which illustrate that particular point.

In 1992, when this program formally began in North Riverside, there was no set-in-stone agenda. I would say it was born from a trust between our former mayor and myself and grew day-to-day through acts of kindness by the block captains. I found in the mayor, a politician who listened, and who believed that politicians should use their power to serve the people

For me, it was an answer to my prayers to have a way to say 'thank you' to North Riverside neighbors who had supported our family for years in caring for our son David, who has severe disabilities.

Our hope is that after applying the points of the art of caring, you too will see with your own eyes a network of caring spread over your town, your business, your church, or your school.

Carol Spale, Coordinator of Neighborhood Services

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

The four points of the Art of Caring are used as the basis for our program. They can be applied by any individual who hopes to create a sense of family on his or her block.

Each town or group has their unique needs. This manual contains the experiences of the 100 block captains of North Riverside and how they lived the art of caring each day for nineteen years. The real life stories show how, through living the art of caring, their relationships with their neighbors changed and a sense of peace spread throughout town.

We share stories of how block captains have lived each point and internet stories which are also grouped according to the four points. These stories can be used in various ways. Either they can be just read by an individual and those who listen will then be inspired to try the ideas presented on their blocks. They can also be used as an encouragement for a group to begin to see their neighbors in a new way through the perspective of the art of caring.

The angel stories in the newsletter, small acts of kindness, also present a way to spread the idea of living the golden rule throughout a town or an organization. Block party and Christmas tree stories are shared with the members of the Committee who may hesitate to be the first to reach out to their neighbors.

You can pick and choose which parts of this manual can be used in your unique situation. Please contact us if we can be of assistance in sharing ideas which might help you to implement this program.

WARNING---NEVER GIVE UP

The Art of Caring truly can transform any town or organization. However, the transformation does not happen overnight. Instead, the experience has to be lived and the ever new stories that come from life have to be heard again and again as a group. Sharing positive stories together at every meeting gives the captains the courage to care because they know they are not alone. Then all can go ahead with hope and perseverance. They try to care concretely about each neighbor each day.

With time, those hearing the stories begin to develop new relationships with their neighbors and they begin to learn to always look around them, being the first to reach out and to reach out to every person. They learn to reach out even though they have their own problems. The coordinator and the area reps try to show the block captains how to live the art of caring through how they interact with them. Then the captains can more easily live this with the neighbors on their blocks since they have experienced themselves what they are to give others.

Over time the spirit of family develops.....

THE ART OF CARING

- ❖ **Point 1: Be The First To Reach Out**
- ❖ **Point 2: Reach Out To Everyone**
- ❖ **Point 3: Be One With People,
Sharing Their Joys And Sorrows As If They Are
Your Own**
- ❖ **Point 4: Be Concrete In Caring**

These four points, when lived, lead to reciprocal caring and the spirit of family. The Art of Caring is adapted from Art of Loving, first presented by Chiara Lubich, the late foundress of the Focolare Movement. For more information visit:
[www.focolare.org\(international\)](http://www.focolare.org(international)) or www.focolare.us

How The Art of Caring Changes One's Perspective

Our former mayor has said it has helped him not just to think of our town only but the other towns around us. We have been interacting with those from other political parties and we welcome them publicly and try to go beyond the interests of just the political party. After all, we all share the same goal which is to make our towns very livable places. We have made contact with others outside of our town to share resources and have started to build working relationships with them.

As an example, we have held a joint senior fair now for a number of years, working together with the neighboring towns to share ideas and resources. This has also helped our residents very much. We now have a social worker from the council on aging come out to our town monthly so seniors would not have to travel far to get help. There are numerous examples of collaborations between the towns in our area. The Art of Caring has led us to move beyond just the borders of our town and into the larger community.

THE ART OF CARING

How We Implement the 4 Points

Be the First to Reach Out

We give welcome bags to new residents, sometimes with homemade cookies. The block captains give little live decorated trees at Christmas to one person on block each year. Through this network, we have truly tried to reach every single person in our village.

Reach out to Everyone

The captains knock at everyone's door on their block, even those who are not easy to meet or know, with resource handouts. The handouts are only distributed once or twice a year. They hold block garage sales or block parties where it is possible.

There was a block party get together and a couple on the block was invited for three years and had never come. Finally, the third year they came out. All the neighbors gave them a hand of applause. Even the mailman was invited and came to that party. No one is left out.

Be One With Your Neighbor---Sharing Their Joys and Sorrows As If They Are Your Own

If a resident or a block captains is ill or is worried, we send cards, bring food, or just listen. When we receive calls from those with financial needs or with other problems, we try to listen as if they are our relatives; we give them full attention. Once, after hours, our former mayor called because he was concerned about a resident he had met who was depressed. He asked us to call and offer resources because he could not get her out of his thoughts. He was concerned for her.

We feel for one another, especially those who are suffering. We also make use of emails to share concerns or to communicate to the captains if someone is in trouble.

Be Concrete in Caring

We have informational handouts for all residents on health, safety, and financial resources. We have speakers at our Neighborhood Services meeting to inform captains of services they can share with their neighbors. Very often, those who have experienced this type of caring then turn around and show it to others.

One time, going door to door with the handouts, a captain discovered an older couple without a working stove. The captain told us and we were able to find the resources to buy her a stove. All of us can make a difference with little acts of kindness in our homes, neighborhoods, churches, & towns. That is why we used the following poem when we first began our Committee of Neighborhood Services because each person wants to make a difference.....

EXCELLENT MOTIVATIONAL WEBSITES

In many of our meetings, we not only share stories of what is happening in our village but we also share inspirational stories and quotes from around the world. Some of them are found at the following websites:

www.lindaslyrics.com

Beautiful Eulogy Poem called the Dash
Helps individual and groups set right priorities in life
Copyright laws prevent us printing it here but
can be used orally without any agreement

www.simpletruths.com

Has a newsletter, quotes, free motivational slide shows

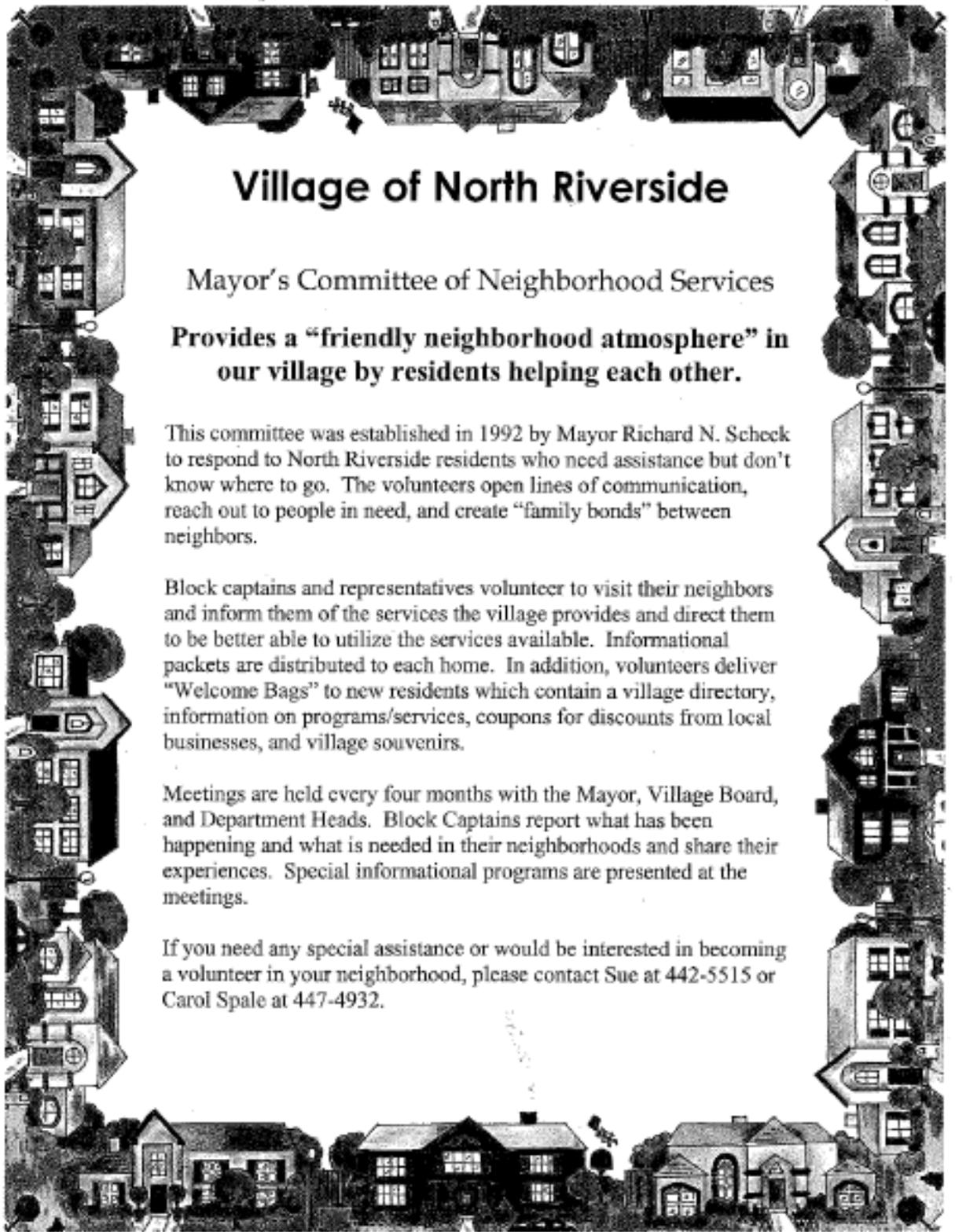
www.rogerknapp.com/knap/inspire.htm

Has a list of many inspiring stories that are circulated on Internet

www.great-quotes.com

Contains many quotes by categories and by most popular famous people,
proverbs from around the world

Here is the flyer we used to advertise our committee:



Village of North Riverside

Mayor's Committee of Neighborhood Services

Provides a "friendly neighborhood atmosphere" in our village by residents helping each other.

This committee was established in 1992 by Mayor Richard N. Scheck to respond to North Riverside residents who need assistance but don't know where to go. The volunteers open lines of communication, reach out to people in need, and create "family bonds" between neighbors.

Block captains and representatives volunteer to visit their neighbors and inform them of the services the village provides and direct them to be better able to utilize the services available. Informational packets are distributed to each home. In addition, volunteers deliver "Welcome Bags" to new residents which contain a village directory, information on programs/services, coupons for discounts from local businesses, and village souvenirs.

Meetings are held every four months with the Mayor, Village Board, and Department Heads. Block Captains report what has been happening and what is needed in their neighborhoods and share their experiences. Special informational programs are presented at the meetings.

If you need any special assistance or would be interested in becoming a volunteer in your neighborhood, please contact Sue at 442-5515 or Carol Spale at 447-4932.

PART 1--HOW WE LIVE EACH POINT

CHAPTER 1---BE THE FIRST TO REACH OUT— EXPERIENCES FROM OUR VILLAGE

Story #1--

A woman was determined to be friendly with her next door neighbor. So every morning, when she walked her dog, she would greet him and wish him a good morning. She did this morning after morning with no response from her neighbor. In fact, one morning, as she was walking her dog in the alley, he almost ran over her because he pulled out his car so fast...

But she continued to try. Morning after morning, she greeted him. One morning, as she greeted him, he said, "Good morning to you too". She was amazed. Now they are the best of neighbors.

Story #2--

A woman had a friend coming from another state for a short visit. The friend was an older lady who was the primary caregiver for her husband who was very ill. The visit was a short respite. The resident decided to do something special so the trip would remain in her friend's memory. So, she bought tickets for a play downtown. But she did not tell her friend that she also called for a limousine to take them there in style. She knew her friend had never been inside one.

The day came and the friend looked out the window and saw the limo blocking their car. She was concerned. Then her friend told her about the surprise. They had a great time! She told her friend that the limousine ride would always be a wonderful memory for her.

Story #3--

One time, a captain chose to give the little live Christmas tree to a man who was very ill. He was touched by the little tree since he had no decorations in his room and remained in bed always. The next day, we received a phone call from the niece. She said, "Thank you so much for what you have done. After the captain left, my uncle asked if we could drive him around town to see all the decorations. We had been asking him to do this, but he refused to try and now he wanted to go out." She said she had tears in her eyes.

A few months later, we learned he passed away but we felt great joy that we had made his last Christmas on earth a little happier.

Story #4--

Once while campaigning, a town official found a block where the mailman never gets to eat lunch because all the people on the block alternate feeding him sandwiches!

Story #5--

One of our captains who was in her nineties had welcomed her new neighbor with, not only a welcome bag, but with a homemade cake. She was always there for her neighbor and his three little girls. The captain invited him for a meeting on visitor night and told him that he was so chivalrous to open the car door for her.

The man tried to show his care to this captain in her last weeks of life by visiting each day with his daughters. He even hoped to have a bench erected in her memory near the park at the end of the block so neighbors would remember her. He was deeply touched by her life.

Story #6--

A thirty-five year resident was moving away. Two neighbors decided to host a going-away luncheon. They collected donations from others for a gift and for flowers. The woman who was moving was so touched by their kindness.

Surprisingly, the neighbors were just as touched by meeting each other that they planned an annual pot luck luncheon to stay in contact with their "new " friends.

Story #7--

A mom had just returned from the hospital after knee surgery. While trying to prepare dinner, an accidental kitchen fire started. A neighbor ran over to help. Firemen quickly arrived but the kitchen was very badly damaged. But neighbors began pitching in –they drove her children to school and even cooked her meals. The mom was very grateful.

Story #8--

There was a power outage on one side of a block for over 30 hours. A neighbor ran borrowed extension cords to her neighbors on the other side of the street so that could get power to turn her oxygen on. The Public Works employees stopped by to place two protective barriers to protect the cord that was running across the street. Other neighbors stored food in their refrigerators. And another neighbor started a generator for a family with frail individuals.

CHAPTER 1-BE THE FIRST TO REACH OUT— **ANGEL STORIES**

These are reprints from our quarterly village newsletter. These short descriptions are used to help residents have ideas on how to simply create a network of caring around them.

- Angel who filled a teenager's car with balloons to celebrate their special birthday
- Angel who gave the garbage man aspirin when she found out his back was hurting.
- Angel who was in fragile health but offered to wrap cookies left over from our village party so they could be given to those who were homebound for Christmas.
- Teen Angel who hauled out the garbage for his neighbor
- Angel who went door to door , holding a chihuahua, looking for its owner
- Little Angel of six or seven who served cookies at our Senior Fair with a big smile.
- Senior Angel, over 80 years of age, who drove in rush hour to get a prescription for a woman who had dropped her medication so the woman would not worry.
- Angel neighbors who tied a balloon to the porch rail to welcome home a neighbor home from the hospital.
- Homebound Angel who accepted calls five times a day from her neighbor with worries.
- There was a woman who straightened the books after each Mass and then would take the opportunity to greet the people who came in early for next Mass. She also brought home grown tomatoes for those who sat next to her each Sunday.
- There was a resident who had a special message on her answering machine, thanking people for calling and wishing that they had a good day. Some said the message touched their heart.

CHAPTER 1: BE THE FIRST TO REACH OUT-- **OTHER STORIES WHICH ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT**

When I Was a Freshman in High School

One day when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class was walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday. He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I

saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, "Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives." He looked at me and said, "Hey thanks!" There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before. We talked all the way home, and I carried some of his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play a little football with my friends. He said yes. We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him.

Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, "Boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!" He just laughed and handed me half the books. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship.

Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak. Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was jealous. Today was one of those days. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. "Thanks," he said. As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began. "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story."

I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard a gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us about his weakest moment. I saw his Mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize it's depth. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life.

Take from: www.yuni.com

The Daffodil Principle by Jaroldeen Edwards, from book Celebration

Several times my daughter had telephoned to say, "Mother, you must come to see the daffodils before they are over." I wanted to go, but it was a two-hour drive from Laguna to Lake Arrowhead "I will come next Tuesday", I promised a little reluctantly on her third call.

Next Tuesday dawned cold and rainy. Still, I had promised, and reluctantly I drove there. When I finally walked into Carolyn's house I was welcomed by the joyful sounds of happy children. I delightedly hugged and greeted my grandchildren. "Forget the daffodils, Carolyn! The road is invisible in these clouds and fog, and there is nothing in the world except you and the children that I want to see badly enough to drive another inch!"

My daughter smiled calmly and said, "We drive in this all the time, Mother."

"Well, you won't get me back on the road until it clears, and then I'm heading for home!" I assured her.

"But first we're going to see the daffodils. It's just a few blocks," Carolyn said. "I'll drive. I'm used to this."

"Carolyn," I said sternly, "Please turn around."

"It's all right, Mother, I promise. You will never forgive yourself if you miss this experience."

After about twenty minutes, we turned onto a small gravel road and I saw a small church. On the far side of the church, I saw a hand lettered sign with an arrow that read, "Daffodil Garden ."

We got out of the car, each took a child's hand, and I followed Carolyn down the path. Then, as we turned a corner, I looked up and gasped. Before me lay the most glorious sight.

It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it over the mountain and its surrounding slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, creamy white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, and saffron and butter yellow. Each different colored variety was planted in large groups so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. There were five acres of flowers.

"Who did this?" I asked Carolyn. "Just one woman," Carolyn answered. "She lives on the property. That's her home." Carolyn pointed to a well-kept A-frame house, small and modestly sitting in the midst of all that glory. We walked up to the house.

On the patio, we saw a poster. "Answers to the Questions I Know You Are Asking". The first answer was a simple one. "50,000 bulbs," it read. The second answer was, "One at a time, by one woman. Two hands, two feet, and one brain." The third answer was, "Began in 1958."

For me, that moment was a life-changing experience. I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than forty years before, had begun, one bulb at a time, to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountaintop. Planting one bulb at a time, year after year, this unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. One day at a time, she had created something of extraordinary magnificence, beauty, and inspiration. The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration.

That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time - often just one baby-step at time - and learning to love the doing, learning to use the accumulation of time. When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. *We can change the world .*



The Carpenter & Two Brothers

Once upon a time two brothers, who lived on adjoining farms, fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labor and goods as needed without a conflict. Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference, and finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on one farmer's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's tool box. "I'm looking for a few days' work" he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there I could help with? Could I help you?" "Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you." "Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor; in fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll do him one better." "See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence --an 8-foot fence -- so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore." The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

The older brother had to go to town, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day. The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing. About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job.

The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge -- a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work, handrails and all -- and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming toward them, his hand outstretched. "You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done." The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox onto his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother. "I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, but I have many more bridges to build.

Do you have any bridges that you need to build?

Author Unknown—

taken from--www.wow4u.com



CHAPTER 2: REACH OUT TO EVERYBODY **EXPERIENCES FROM OUR VILLAGE**

Story #1--

We assisted a woman abused by a caregiver to find another one with the help of our public works director, our handyman, our recreation liaison and our representative at the local Council on Aging. There are still problems but her situation is much improved!

Story #2--

A woman from Poland needed the correct papers to stay in our country. The block captain let us know and we called and the village. The mayor contacted the local congressman and discussed what steps she needed to take to get legal documentation. She was able to do so. Then for the first in nine years, she could go to Poland to visit her family and not worry that she could not come back.

Story #3--

A middle aged man with disabilities had his electrical power turned off because he could not pay bills. He found resources to help but was still short some. We found out and were able to get emergency money from a local assistance organization. When we gave him a check, he said that he would take it but please to tell him if there was any resident that needed weeds pulled or the lawn mowed so he could have a way to give back.

Story #4--

A block captain told us how she hung little bags on all her neighbors' doorknobs on the block. They were filled with a notepad, a poem, candy and a little bunny. She received a phone call after doing this from a woman who never talked to them and was not friendly. She said thank you to the block captain for this surprise. it brought back memories when she was little and had May Day bags. The block captain was very happy.

Story #5--

We received a call from a resident who offered many lotions and creams to our local nursing home. A few days later, the phone rang and a senior called to ask a block captain to help her with her grocery stopping since she and her sister were not well. We thought we could make them feel better by giving some lotions with the groceries. So we asked their favorites and told them we would bring the lotions to them. They were excited and promised to call back later with the grocery list. But there was no call.

When we called later, we found that the sister we talked to had fallen and was in the hospital and her other sister was so worried. The captain went and helped her with groceries, etc. and gave the one sister her lotion and left one for her sister when she would come home. This really seemed to make the one sister happy, and the one in the hospital could not wait to come home to have her lotion too.

Story #6--

A woman called needing a caregiver, saying she had not been well for two weeks and was feeling faint. We called agencies but they could not provide the service for the amount of money she felt she could pay. We felt so bad we could not find a caregiver.

We told her we were sorry we could not help. She said she had some friends that maybe could help. After hanging up, we thought that maybe some homemade chicken soup would help to get her strength back. We also decided to give her some lavender lotion which was calming. We called her back, offering to bring the soup and the lotion. We could not believe her response. She said, "In heaven's name, why would do this for me, a stranger."

We told her that it was we do in town; we try to treat each other like we would treat our family. She was so touched. Then she shared that her husband and daughter had both died in the last two years. Also she herself had been in a bad car accident and had been afraid to drive. Now we understood why she had been a little curt and a little strong. She also asked if we could come to visit again.

Story #7--

One woman in her apartment building decided to get to know her neighbors by inviting them to her apartment. This way she could have neighbors from all cultures and backgrounds. They met as neighbors and became friends.

CHAPTER 2: REACH OUT TO EVERYBODY— OTHER STORIES WHICH ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT

Johnny the Bagger

from www.simpletruths.com)

Click on For Business, then click on Customer thank you, scroll down to one before the last, click below picture of brown bag, then under book, click on for movie... Movie is excellent and very moving. It is a true story.

First, tell the story or show the slide show of Johnny the Bagger .The video is great but the speaker can also just tell the story, then follow up. Afterwards ask.....how can you be a Johnny today?

Experiences From Our Town After We Shared this Video:

- One brought a coffee pot with coffee to a disabled resident to have breakfast together.
- One made stuffed cabbages and brought to post office employees.
- One block captain had neighbors who did not really want block party, so she met with a couple of them at a local restaurant just to be together.

- One block captain just had a big block party last year and this year went to other block captains on block north of him with handouts and invited that whole block, which did not have a party this year, to come to his party.
- One woman, who is Arabic and from Jerusalem, cooks wonderful Mediterranean food. She decided to invite her apartment neighbors over to her little studio apartment. She had set it up with one big table in the middle of floor almost like a little restaurant and then she served the most delicious dinner with appetizers and dessert from her cultural background. The five neighbors stayed over two hours and they had a wonderful time. She wants to do it again.

The Berlin Wall

When Willie Brandt was mayor of West Berlin, some of the people of East Berlin threw garbage over the Wall separating the two parts of the city. The people of West Berlin were very angry and wanted to dump their garbage and more back over the Wall

The Mayor said instead to dump flowers back over the wall into East Berlin. The people did as he said and so instead of returning garbage with garbage, he gave back flowers. What do we give back when our neighbors or friends hurt us?

The Obstacles in Our Path

In ancient times, a King had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock.

Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been.

The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway.

---The peasant learned what many of us never understand. Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

Author Unknown Taken from www.wow4u.com

Care About Your Brother

Many years ago, when I worked as a volunteer at a hospital, I got to know a little girl named Liz who was suffering from a rare & serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister.

I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her." As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the color returning to her cheek. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?" Being young, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her. Understanding and Attitude, after all, are everything.

The Test

During my second month of college, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions until I read the last one: 'What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?' Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50's, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Just before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. "Absolutely," said the professor. 'In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They need your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello. I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

Always Remember Those Who Serve

In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10-year-old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. 'How much is an ice cream sundae?' he asked. "Fifty cents, replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied the coins in it. 'Well, how much is a plain dish of ice cream?' he inquired. By now more people were waiting for a table and the waitress was growing impatient. 'Thirty-five cents,' she brusquely replied. The little boy again counted his coins. 'I'll have the plain ice cream,' he said.

The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier and left. When the waitress came back, she began to cry as she wiped down the table. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies. You see, he couldn't have the sundae, because he had to have enough left to leave her a tip. Treat each person with respect in each moment you are given.

All three stories taken from www.winnersworld.com

How Much Do You Make An Hour?

A man came home from work late again, tired and irritated, to find his 5-year-old son waiting for him at the door. "Daddy, may I ask you a question?" "Yeah, sure, what is it?" replied the man. "Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?" "That's none of your business! What makes you ask such a thing?" the man said angrily. "I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?" pleaded the little boy. "If you must know, I make \$20.00 an hour." "Oh," the little boy replied, head bowed. Looking up, he said, "Daddy, may I borrow \$10.00 please?"

The father was furious. "If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is just so you can borrow some to buy a silly toy or some other nonsense, then you march yourself straight to your room and go to bed. Think about why you're being so selfish. I work long, hard hours everyday and don't have time for such childish games." The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door. The man sat down and started to get even madder about the little boy's questioning. How dare he ask such questions only to get some money.

After an hour or so, the man had calmed down, and started to think he may have been a little hard on his son. Maybe there was something he really needed to buy with that \$10.00, and he really didn't ask for money very often. The man went to the door of the little boy's room and opened the door. "Are you asleep son?" he asked. "No daddy, I'm awake," replied the boy. "I've been thinking, maybe I was too hard on you earlier," said the man. "It's been a long day and I took my aggravation out on you. Here's that \$10.00 you asked for." The little boy sat straight up, beaming. "Oh, thank you daddy!" he yelled. Then, reaching under his pillow, he pulled out some more crumpled up bills.

The man, seeing that the boy already had money, started to get angry again. The little boy slowly counted out his money, then looked up at the man. "Why did you want more money if you already had some?" the father grumbled. "Because I didn't have enough, but now I do," the little boy replied. "Daddy, I have \$20.00 now. Can I buy an hour of your time?" The dad was stunned and hugged his son...Share some time with those who need you. They need our time more then we will ever know.

Author Unknown Taken from--www.amitai-intl.org

CHAPTER 3: BE ONE WITH PEOPLE SHARING THEIR JOYS AND SORROWS AS IF THEY ARE YOUR OWN— EXPERIENCES FROM OUR VILLAGE

Story #1--

A single mom with a teenage son called looking for a food basket. We happened to have extra food because the Boy Scouts had just collected from all the people in town. Then another woman called and told us she had leftover toys from a toy drive. They were brought too late for the pickup. So we found a couple of toys were just right for the teenage son. Then we sent the mom to the local township and they gave her gift certificates for local food stores. She was very happy. All the groups had worked together. She felt as if people really cared for her.

Story #2--

A family in town had many relatives coming for Christmas Eve dinner. Their stove had broken down so they could only have ham and potato salad. Then the phone rang the day before and some neighbors said they were going to help with the dinner, each one bringing a dish before the company arrived. One brought cookies; another brought a jello mold; another brought a casserole; and finally one brought cookies and fruit. The family was so touched by the kindness of their neighbors who had helped when they saw the family's need.

Story #3--

Our former mayor told the captains at one meeting what an important a job they do and told a story about a captain who had brought a neighbor to the village hall that morning. The woman was crying because her husband was in the hospital. She needed comforting. The mayor and clerk at the village listened to her and tried to help her situation. The mayor was deeply touched when discussing how the captain had brought her to the village hall for assistance.

Story #4--

We were all listening to one person who was speaking at a meeting. Some of the members of the group were thinking that maybe he be interrupted since time was limited. Our former mayor then reminded us that he schedules his morning to be there for whoever wants and he will stay after the meeting, if need be. This really impressed those at the meeting. Even though we like to help a lot, it is hard to listen to each one all the way to the end without being impatient.

Story #5--

This story was overheard at our Recreation Department. It concerned an elderly couple who were registered for a theater trip. An employee called to confirm that the couple was going. The wife said her husband was in the hospital and she said she could not go without him. The employee did not give up; she felt the concern for the woman.

She called back in a few days. The wife said he was back in the hospital again. The employee said not to worry and she offered to call back once more and said she would still hold the place.

The Recreation Department employee called again because she knew they needed to participate in something fun after all the sickness. To the surprise of the couple, the doctor actually said that even though the husband was weak, he could go. The staff member of the Recreation Department was so happy and even had someone stay with and help them all night, walking, getting to the bus. The department provided a good example to all, listening to what the residents need. And the couple was very happy to relax.

Story #6--

One resident who was not well was moving from town after many years of being involved in the government. At the meeting where he was presented with a plaque, one by one the trustees left their seats and came down the aisle toward him to thank him for his service to town. They hugged him, thanked him, wished him well. This priority of service for all filters down to the block captains as we emulate our officials and try to create a sense of family.

Story #7--

Helen, who was from our Recreation department, told us that in one week she accompanied three neighbors to the hospital in ambulance so they would not be alone. Gary who had lung cancer still answered the phone and found resources to help people. He did not tell the people how ill he was. Both Helen and Gary are models of caring for their neighbors without thinking of themselves.

Story #8--

A physically disabled resident was driving home from Chicago. Her car stalled on Roosevelt and Oak Park Avenue on an 80 degree day. She had no cell phone and could not walk the distance to make a call. Customers from the various local businesses walked by as she asked for help, asking for a phone to use. They kept rushing, going ahead. She did not know what to do. Then, two employees from the local Dunkin Donuts were ending their shift and going home. They actually STOPPED and looked, and realized what the situation was. One pushed her car near the curb so she would be safer. The other let her use the cell phone so she could call for help. They went back to get her a drink, for free, and even a donut. The manager said how he wished he had his car so he could jump start her car. They offered to stay until her friends came. Yes, she finally got back to town. But, without the employees, how much longer than the two hours would she have remained there. Fortunately, they took the time to be one with their neighbor, even though a stranger.

Story #9--

A mom, who happens to be a block captain, was rushing to her car to pick up her children from school. She saw her older neighbor who lived alone walking toward her. She did not want to talk at that moment and started to pretend she did not see her. But something told her to wait and greet her. As the neighbor got closer, she saw the woman had a cast on her arm. She told her she had been released from ER a couple of day earlier and had lost the doctor's number in her bag of papers. The cast was hurting her. The captain could not believe it and said she would help her as soon as she got back. She was so glad she had waited, and yes, she was able to help her. So to be one, she did not run away from neighbor who comes at what seems is the wrong time....

Story #10--

A resident died fourteen years ago. The family remembers only one card after all those years. It was from the woman's mailman. He wrote, "I will really miss your mother. Whenever I delivered her mail, she would open the door with a big smile." It made his day. It is such a little thing--to smile at someone who happens to be in front of you in the moment.

CHAPTER 3: BE ONE WITH PEOPLE SHARING THEIR JOYS AND SORROWS AS IF THEY ARE YOUR OWN— ANGEL STORIES

These are reprints from our quarterly village newsletter. These short descriptions are used to help residents have ideas on how to simply create a network of caring around them.

- Local Hero/Heroine Awards:
 - To the lady who called back a resident who mistakenly left an important message on the wrong answering machine to let her know what happened...you saved the day!
 - To the caring man who made a metal track and fasteners (for free) for a family with a disabled child so the child could have a folding door in his room...you're one in a million!
 - To the loving lady in the apartment-A on the east end of town who makes sure that none of the residents park their cars in her neighbor's handicapped parking space...you deserve a hug!
 - To the thoughtful couple who gave away their almost-new wheeled suitcase to a college student whose luggage was not in great shape...you made a young woman smile!
 - To the kind, practical lady who offered to install a new zipper on a jacket for a mom who is all thumbs... you are wonderful!
 - To Michael, the Plumbing Angel, who came out immediately (even though he had many other appointments to keep) to install new bathroom facilities for a resident who had just returned home from the hospital and was in great need. The resident was more than grateful! No matter how busy, people in need come first for this angel.

CHAPTER 3—BE ONE WITH PEOPLE , SHARING JOYS AND SUFFERINGS AS IF THEY ARE YOUR OWN----
OTHER STORIES WHICH ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT

The Cab Ride

Twenty years ago, I drove a cab for a living. When I arrived at 2:30 a.m., the building was dark except for a single light in a ground floor window. Under these circumstances, many drivers would just honk once or twice, wait a minute, then drive away. But, I had seen too many impoverished people who depended on taxis as their only means of transportation. Unless a situation smelled of danger, I always went to the door. This passenger might be someone who needs my assistance, I reasoned to myself. So I walked to the door and knocked. "Just a minute", answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor. After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 80's stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940s movie.

By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware. "Would you carry my bag out to the car?" she said. I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness. "It's nothing", I told her. "I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother treated". "Oh, you're such a good boy", she said.

When we got in the cab, she gave me an address, then asked, "Could you drive through downtown?" "It's not the shortest way," I answered quickly. "Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice". I looked in the rearview mirror. Her eyes were glistening. "I don't have any family left," she continued. "The doctor says I don't have very long." I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. "What route would you like me to take?" I asked.

For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing. As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now."

We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her

every move. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair. "How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching into her purse. "Nothing," I said. "You have to make a living," she answered. "There are other passengers," I responded. Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly. "You gave an old woman a little moment of joy," she said. "Thank you." I squeezed her hand, then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly, lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away? On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware--beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one.

PEOPLE MAY NOT REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID, OR WHAT YOU SAID,
~BUT~ THEY WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.

Taken from www.sconsig.com

Father of Wealthy Family Took His Son on a Trip...

One day, the father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the express purpose of showing him how poor people live. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On their return from their trip the father asked his son, 'How was the trip?' It was great, Dad.' 'Did you see how poor people live?' the father asked. 'Oh yeah, ' said the son. 'So, tell me, what did you learn from the trip?' asked the father. The son answered:

'I saw that we have one dog and they had four.

We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end.

We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night.

Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon.

We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight.

We have servants who serve us, but they serve others.

We buy our food, but they grow theirs.

We have walls around our property to protect us; they have friends to protect them.'

The boy's father was speechless.

Then his son added, 'Thanks Dad for showing me how poor we are.'

Isn't perspective a wonderful thing? Makes you wonder what would happen if we all gave thanks for everything we have, instead of worrying about what we don't have

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Taken From: www.erocker.net

The Hospital Window

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.

One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band - he could see it. In his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days and weeks passed. One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall. The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

Taken from www.wow4u.com

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CHAPTER 4: BE CONCRETE IN CARING

EXAMPLES OF THIS POINT LIVED IN THE VILLAGE:

- We host a children's flea market in the village. Many have commented that the atmosphere is very generous and cheerful. Vendors sometimes give away their toys and clothes. One captain gave away a doll house for a resident artist to use in illustrations. Many, left over toys have been shared with residents in need over the years.
- We received donated spaghetti and pancake breakfast tickets, which block captains share with those on their blocks. One woman called a minute after receiving them, saying it was so perfect. She did not know how she was going to cook her supper that night and these tickets arrived at right moment.
- After activities in the Village, food that is remaining is donated to the local shelter for women and children. One time, our fire department brought left over spaghetti from a dinner and it was accepted with great joy at our local nursing home.
- At Christmas and even at other holidays, residents give their own unused gift certificates, buy gift certificates, offer money to help pay the bills of those in need.
- Our local restaurants offer two-person free dinners. One even shared their leftover catering meal with a local homeless shelter.
- Job opportunities are also circulated by email and posted at the village hall and our local library.

CHAPTER 4: BE CONCRETE IN CARING—
EXPERIENCES FROM OUR VILLAGE
Results of Living this Point—In Other Words—
Caring Gives Back

Story #1--

There was a fifty year old grandmother who was facing foreclosure on her townhouse. She had custody of her two grandchildren. We helped with gift certificates & items from the Giving Tree, Salvation Army emergency money, and food collected from our Christmas party. She was so grateful that about three weeks later, still facing financial problems, she called to say that she had gathered four boxes of clothes that her grandchildren had outgrown. She brought them and said to please give them to other children in need. She wanted to give back. We did as she asked and took them to over to the local school.

Story #2--

A woman was to be evicted from her apartment. Again we shared items from the Giving Tree, food and emergency money. The mayor suggested a lawyer from town who pro bono negotiated with her landlord to avoid her going to court for back rent. A block captain told us about an empty apartment in her building. Two other captains offered to pay the first two months rent. Another helped her get a job at a nearby store. At that time, a woman called who was cleaning out her aunt's house and offered sheets and towels for someone. It was just what this person needed! She was so grateful that she made a homemade card for the woman who had given her the household goods since she did not have money to buy one. She took a bus to come and help package cookies for the baskets for homebound. She told us, "I cannot give back in money, but I can offer to help those who helped me by cleaning, or washing. Things are finally starting to look up for me."

Story #3--

There was a couple in town whose poor health caused their house to fall into disrepair. Neighbors complained and there was need for much cleaning to be done in the house. It was so bad that the village could have called health authorities, but the mayor said to try to live like the love cube---be the first to love. So we asked them what the village could do and the man asked us to cut the grass since his leg had been broken; the village did this for free. Our Recreation Department prepared plates of leftover food from our events and we took it to them. We contacted an agency in a nearby town to help out and they even found a good refrigerator that was being thrown out.

We called and listened to the concerns of the couple. Our Council on Aging was so impressed how our town was handling this that they found grant money to help with the cleaning. The woman called us one day to come over. She opened the door and had tears in her eyes. She said that she was so grateful for how the village had cared for them. and she said, " I want to give something back". She picked up and gave us a very pretty fur coat in a dry cleaner bag. She said to give it to someone who needs it. We do not think any gift touched me us much as that one fur coat!

CHAPTER 4—BE CONCRETE IN CARING--- **STORIES WHICH ILLUSTRATE “CARING GIVES BACK”**

Carl was a Quiet Man

Carl was a quiet man. He didn't talk much. He would always greet you with a big smile and a firm handshake. Even after living in our neighborhood for over 50 years, no one could really say they knew him very well.

Before his retirement, he took the bus to work each morning. The lone sight of him walking down the street often worried us. He had a slight limp from a bullet wound received in World War II. Watching him, we worried that although he had survived the war, he may not make through our changing uptown neighborhood with its ever-increasing random violence, gangs, and drug activity. When he saw the flier at our local church asking for volunteers for caring for the gardens behind the minister's residence, he responded in his characteristically unassuming manner. Without fanfare, he just signed up.

He was well into his 87th year when the very thing we had always feared finally happened. He was just finishing his watering for the day when three gang members approached him. Ignoring their attempt to intimidate him, he simply asked, "Would you like a drink from the hose?" The tallest and toughest-looking of the three said, "Yeah, sure," with a malevolent little smile. As Carl offered the hose to him, the other two grabbed Carl's arm, throwing him down. As the hose snaked crazily over the ground, dousing everything in its way, Carl's assailants stole his retirement watch and his wallet, and then fled.

Carl tried to get himself up, but he had been thrown down on his bad leg. He lay there trying to gather himself as the minister came running to help him. Although the minister had witnessed the attack from his window, he couldn't get there fast enough to stop it. "Carl, are you okay? Are you hurt?" the minister kept asking as he helped Carl to his feet. Carl just passed a hand over his brow and sighed, shaking his head.

"Just some punk kids. I hope they'll wise up someday." His wet clothes clung to his slight frame as he bent to pick up the hose. He adjusted the nozzle again and started to water. Confused and a little concerned, the minister asked, "Carl, what are you doing?" "I've got to finish my watering. It's been very dry lately," came the calm reply. Satisfying himself that Carl really was all right, the minister could only marvel. Carl was a man from a different time and place.

A few weeks later the three returned. Just as before their threat was unchallenged. Carl again offered them a drink from his hose. This time they didn't rob him. They wrenched the hose from his hand and drenched him head to foot in the icy water. When they had finished their humiliation of him, they sauntered off down the street, throwing catcalls and curses, falling over one another laughing at the hilarity of what they had just done.

Carl just watched them. Then he turned toward the warmth giving sun, picked up his hose, and went on with his watering. The summer was quickly fading into fall. Carl was doing some tilling when he was startled by the sudden approach of someone behind him. He stumbled and fell into some evergreen branches. As he struggled to regain his footing, he turned to see the tall leader of his summer tormentors reaching down for him. He braced himself for the expected attack. "Don't worry old man, I'm not gonna hurt you this time." The young man spoke softly, still offering the tattooed and scarred hand to Carl. As he helped Carl get up, the man pulled a crumpled bag from his pocket and handed it to Carl.

"What's this?" Carl asked. "It's your stuff," the man explained. "It's your stuff back. Even the money in your wallet." "I don't understand," Carl said. "Why would you help me now?"

The man shifted his feet, seeming embarrassed and ill at ease. "I learned something from you," he said. "I ran with that gang and hurt people like you. We picked you because you were old and we knew we could do it. But every time we came and did something to you, instead of yelling and fighting back, you tried to give us a drink. You didn't hate us for hating you. You kept showing love against our hate." He stopped for a moment. "I couldn't sleep after we stole your stuff, so here it is back." He paused for another awkward moment, not knowing what more there was to say. "That bag's my way of saying thanks for straightening me out, I guess." And with that, he walked off down the street.

Carl looked down at the sack in his hands and gingerly opened it. He took out his retirement watch and put it back on his wrist. Opening his wallet, he checked for his wedding photo. He gazed for a moment at the young bride that still smiled back at him from all those years ago.

He died one cold day after Christmas that winter. Many people attended his funeral in spite of the weather. In particular the minister noticed a tall young man that he didn't know sitting quietly in a distant corner of the church. The minister spoke of Carl's garden as a lesson in life. In a voice made thick with unshed tears, he said, "Do your best and make your garden as beautiful as you can. We will never forget Carl and his garden."

The following spring another flier went up. It read: "Person needed to care for Carl's garden." The flier went unnoticed by the busy parishioners until one day when a knock was heard at the minister's office door. Opening the door, the minister saw a pair of scarred and tattooed hands holding the flier. "I believe this is my job, if you'll have me," the young man said.

The minister recognized him as the same young man who had returned the stolen watch and wallet to Carl. He knew that Carl's kindness had turned this man's life

around. As the minister handed him the keys to the garden shed, he said, "Yes, go take care of Carl's garden and honor him."

The man went to work and, over the next several years, he tended the flowers and vegetables just as Carl had done. In that time, he went to college, got married, and became a prominent member of the community. But he never forgot his promise to Carl's memory and kept the garden as beautiful as he thought Carl would have kept it.

One day he approached the new minister and told him that he couldn't care for the garden any longer. He explained with a shy and happy smile, "My wife just had a baby boy last night, and she's bringing him home on Saturday." "Well, congratulations!" said the minister, as he was handed the garden shed keys. "That's wonderful!" he replied. "What's the baby's name?"

"Carl"

Taken From: www.motivateus.com

Waitress at a Diner

He was driving home one evening, on a two-lane country road. Work, in this small mid-western community, was almost as slow as his beat-up Pontiac. But he never quit looking. Ever since the Levis factory closed, he'd been unemployed, and with winter raging on, the chill had finally hit home. It was a lonely road. Not very many people had a reason to be on it, unless they were leaving. Most of his friends had already left. They had families to feed and dreams to fulfill. But he stayed on. After all, this was where he buried his mother and father. He was born here and knew the country.

He could go down this road blind, and tell you what was on either side, and with his headlights not working, that came in handy. It was starting to get dark and light snow flurries were coming down. He'd better get a move on.

You know, he almost didn't see the old lady, stranded on the side of the road. But even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His Pontiac was still sputtering when he approached her. Even with the smile on his face, she was worried. No one had stopped to help for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look safe, he looked poor and hungry. He could see that she was frightened, standing out there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was that chill that only fear can put in you. He said, "I'm here to help you ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it's warm. By the way, my name is Joe."

Well, all she had was a flat tire, but for an old lady, that was bad enough. Joe crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles a time or two. Soon he was able to change the tire. But he had to get dirty and his hands hurt. As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she rolled down her window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from St. Louis and was only just passing through. She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid. Joe just smiled as he closed her trunk.

She asked him how much she owed him. Any amount would have been alright with her. She had already imagined all the awful things that could have happened had he not stopped. Joe never thought twice about the money. This was not job to him. This was helping someone in need, and God knows there were plenty who had given him a hand in the past. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way. He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she saw someone who needed help, she could give that person the assistance that they needed, and Joe added "...and think of me."

He waited until she started her car and drove off. It had been a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed for home, disappearing into the twilight. A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of her trip home. It was a dingy looking restaurant. Outside were two old gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. The cash register was like the telephone of an out of work actor; it didn't ring much.

Her waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her wet hair. She had a sweet smile, one that even being on her feet for the whole day couldn't erase. The lady noticed that the waitress was nearly eight months pregnant, but she never let the strain and aches change her attitude. The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so nice and giving to a total stranger. It was then she remembered Joe.

After the lady finished her meal, and the waitress went to get her change from a hundred dollar bill, the lady slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. She wondered where the lady could be, then she noticed something written on a napkin. There were tears in her eyes as she read what the lady wrote. It said, "You don't owe me a thing, I've been there too. Someone once helped me out, the way I'm helping you. If you really want to pay me back, here's what you do. Don't let the chain of love end with you."

Well, there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day. That night when she got home from work and climbed into bed, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could she have known how much she and her husband needed it? And with the baby due next month, it was going to be hard. She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping next to her, she gave him a soft kiss and whispered soft and low, "I just know everything's gonna be alright; I love you, Joe."

Originally written from a true experience by the late Jonnie Barnett and Rory Lee. It was first recorded by Clay Walker, then Charlie Pride in a song called **Chain of Love**. It is reproduced here with written with permission from Barbara A. Barnett Kaye. Her website is www.chainoflove.com.

PART 2: STRUCTURE & ACTIVITIES OF NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

CHAPTER 1: HOW WE ARE STRUCTURED

The Mayor supports this program and gives members the freedom to explore new ideas to promote this committee throughout the village. We have 3 main positions in our organization: Block Captain, Area Representative and Coordinator. Below is a description of each position.

THE BLOCK CAPTAIN

The Block Captain is the heart of the Mayor's Committee of Neighborhood Services. We have 100 block captains who spread this network of caring over our town day by day as they live the art of caring. They drive their neighbors to the doctor; they ask neighbors to all sign a card for a neighbor coming home from the hospital; they make sure their neighbors are safe when there is a power outage; they invite neighbors over to share a meal or a cup of coffee; they shovel snow; they rake leaves. Their children bring cards, flowers, or little gifts to those in need on the block. They are always on call.

The block captains can be young, older, single, or couples. At one time, there were junior block captains from the eighth grade in the local school. North Riverside captains range in age from about 30 to 96. They are the silent heroes who, one by one, block by block, serve their neighbors.

HOW DID WE IDENTIFY THE BLOCK CAPTAINS?

It has not been difficult to recruit the persons to serve as block captains. We knew that even though they were called captains, they were block "servers". They were the ones who lived the golden rule. Also this was and continues to be a nonpolitical group. We also would ask people we knew on each block, "Who is the person that takes the mail, take out the garbage cans when people were on vacation...Who snowplowed the block?"

Then we would call that person and tell them they were recommended by their neighbors since they already were concerned about those who lived on the block. Also we would check at local churches and school groups. Sometimes block captains, who could not serve any longer, recommended people they knew. We would ask in the village newsletter explaining this was a job of serving. We began with 72 captains. About 23 are now deceased. Some have retired. But we continue to grow, with younger individuals and couples. There are now 100 block captains in our village with a population of almost 6900.

THE AREA REPRESENTATIVE

The neighborhoods are grouped together into areas and each area has a person who coordinates activities and communication in his/her area. This person is called the area representative. Each one tries to use the opportunities they are given to connect with their block captains in their area---calling them to find out their positive stories as well as their concerns. Some area reps have annual get togethers at their house so they can mix informally with the captains in their area and get to know one another.

THE COORDINATOR

Each person who reads this manual will bring his or her own perspective, talents and experience into what this program can accomplish in each organization, church or town. However, the role of a coordinator requires a certain philosophy to succeed. We had a few ideas when we began, but it was working together and being open to others that allowed all the aspects to develop.

It is important to point out that we deliberately chose the word 'coordinator' rather than 'director.' This was done to emphasize that the role was to bring people together, facilitate joint decisions and receive ideas and stories from the block captains and then use every means to share these throughout the town. Also it was to stress that all of us from the coordinator to the captains are block SERVERS - we serve our neighbors throughout the day.

Quote From Carol Spale—Our Coordinator

As coordinator, I felt I had to always keep before me the two-fold goal of this program: to create a sense of family among the members of our committee that would overflow and cover our town and to build a bridge between the residents and village officials. The second goal was implemented through providing handouts, which would make our residents aware of resources or events. Ideas for handouts often came from the area representatives or the mayor.

But the first goal, I believe, is the essence of the role of the coordinator. The coordinator must always try to create a sense of family. This is done by putting into practice four points of the art of caring: (1) be the first to reach out; (2) reach out to everyone; (3) be one with people sharing their joys and sorrows as if they are your own; and (4) be concrete in helping in every encounter throughout the day.

We found that, with time, this leads neighbors to give back so that a feeling of all working together to help and share with one another is created. Although this may not seem to have a lot to do with the organization of the committee, it has everything to do with changing how people interact with one another. The coordinator must consciously be aware of this and be an example of how a person should live with this new perspective of seeing all as brothers and sisters.

EXPERIENCES ILLUSTRATING THE COORDINATOR ROLE IN SHARING THE SPIRIT OF THE ART OF CARING

Many times people are referred to me because of financial or caregiving needs. I really try to listen attentively to them, feeling their concerns as my own. Many times I share how this town had helped us when we were in need with our son David who has multiple disabilities. I tell them we needed help as a family and our neighbors helped. Now they need help. We take turns being in need and in helping. If they call me "Ma'am", I correct them and stress I am "Carol". I want them to see our conversation as person to person, like brothers and sisters.

One time an article was published in the local paper about the Mayor's Committee of Neighborhood Services and how we try to create the spirit of family. A woman called about the article and I was so happy, thinking she had been touched by it and might want to be a captain. Her next sentence changed all that. She said, "Well, I have no captain...no one welcomed me...." and told me of her troubles. At first, I wanted to defend the program. But fortunately I remembered "to be one with neighbors" and I kept quiet and listened. I then let her know I was so sorry that the program had not worked for her. By the end of our conversation, we had built a rapport. I found out about her dad who was once a major league baseball player. We worked out that a captain would adopt her block and talked about ways to meet the needs of her block. She felt cared about and she then was able to reach out.

One night we had a meeting of the block captains. These meetings are a chance for the area representatives to sit with the block captains and get to know them and their blocks better. That night, due to many circumstances, very few area reps came. I felt lost because I count on them to talk to the twelve block captains at their table, to get the handouts to those absent, and to support me during my presentation because I am not comfortable talking in front of groups. My first reaction was that the meeting should have been their priority. I wondered if they understood what the program was about. But, when I arrived home, I thought that my response should be to take out note cards and write to each area rep. I told them how grateful I was for all they had done before and that I had missed them that night. I felt so peaceful after that and I realized that what was important was not coming to a meeting, but the sense of caring. I realized that they could not care about their captains unless I cared about them. In the end, we all felt closer and the next time we had the meeting, they were able to come.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS OF AREA REPRESENTATIVES & BLOCK CAPTAINS

“Creating a Sense of Family”

MAYOR’S COMMITTEE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Area Representative Procedures

1. Meet with the Mayor and coordinator prior to block captain meetings.
-Call all your block captains before the meeting (also to know their needs).
-If you can’t attend the meeting, please call a substitute and notify the coordinator.
2. Distribute welcome bags monthly to block captains (deliver if necessary). The coordinator will contact you if you have any new residents in the area.
-Distribute trees to captains at Christmas (those on the west side, pick them up from the village).
3. Call all of your block captains a few days before the Block Captains meeting to see if they will be able to attend. If they can’t, please have them send a substitute. Make sure all welcome bags and handouts get to ALL the block captains (deliver if necessary). Please keep the coordinator up to date if any of your block captains have needs or health problems.

Block Captain Procedures

1. Handouts are to be distributed within two weeks of a meeting.
2. If you wish, take a notebook or paper to record any resident’s requests, complaints, or suggestions. Try to see each resident at least once a year when distributing handouts.
3. If a resident is not home, place handout materials in plastic doorknob bag and hand on their door.
4. Contact your area representative with any feedback. Please call the Recreation Dept. at 442-5515 or Carol Spale at 447-4932 if you are unable to reach your representative.
5. Welcome bags should be distributed within two weeks. If this person is not home, leave a note on the door with your name, address and phone number. DO NOT JUST LEAVE IT ON THE PORCH.
6. Please remember to wear your name badges at future meetings.

THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP!!!

CHAPTER 2: OUR MEETINGS

We have two types of meetings approximately 3 times a year. They are described below:

Area Representatives Meetings:

The Mayor meets with the coordinator, Recreation Director, all the area representatives to choose speakers for the three large block captain meetings, to share problems and initiatives in village and hear area representatives concerns and positive feedback. This meeting occurs 2 weeks to a month prior to the time the larger meeting is scheduled. Each area representative shares for about seven minutes at the meeting. The mayor often stays after the meeting to hear anything additional things they have to say. We say that these meetings should be more than just a meeting but a spirit to be lived in our community.

There are two experiences that illustrate what these meetings are like and what the area representatives try to live in this role.

- One time, one of the area representatives, who is a very busy professional, brought the little Christmas trees to each captain in her area so they could then in turn give the tree to the neighbor who had been chosen that year. The area rep made herself a promise to give them the tree, but then to wait a few minutes and not rush to the next person's house. She was amazed because the first two captains were so grateful she remained and talked with them about their concerns. She only visited two captains in a half hour but she felt that by listening, she helped to create the network of caring, one by one, with the block captains in her area.
- Another time, one of the area reps had to babysit her children in the same building as we were holding the area rep meeting. We saw her looking through the glass doors. Afterwards, she told the coordinator that she wished so much that she could have come inside and be with all of us. She said that she liked the atmosphere even more at these core meetings than the big meetings. Afterwards, we took the leftover bakery from the meeting and gave it to her and her family so she would know how much she was missed.

Block Captains Meetings:

The Mayor, Trustees and Department Heads attend three "large" block captain meetings during the year (usually Sept., Feb., May) along with the block captains and "junior high captains." Speakers address pertinent issues — seniors, safety, and local programs. The Coordinator is given time to explain handouts (which Recreation department prepares) and share motivational stories/positive feedback to maintain enthusiasm among the captains. The Mayor ends the meeting after a question and answer period for adults & teens.

Before all meetings either the coordinator or area representatives (each responsible for 12 block captains) calls each block captain to personally remind them of the meeting, hear their positive feedback and see if they themselves are in any need — to make them also feel like family so they can better create a "family" on their block. The Coordinator sends out cards to any block captain for happy/sad times.

There is a five to ten minute talk on the art of caring presented at each meeting. These is based on either current event stories, internet stories, or happenings in the village. For example, a week before our winter meeting, there was a big snowstorm. It was on a Saturday and many people came out to help. Some plowed the whole blocks for their neighbors. Others offered to shovel steps for the seniors on their blocks. We saw what residents did to help others, then emailed the block captains for any additional stories they knew about; and, finally, summarized the best stories that we heard.

Sometimes at our meetings, one or two of the captains agree to stand up and talk about their block parties, or acts of kindness their neighbors have done for one another. After their short talks, we follow up with an internet story or newspaper article or quote which emphasizes the point of their story.

Other times, we share the less confidential, positive stories of how the little Christmas trees or amaryllis bulbs (the captains give out in early December) affected their neighbors. Those stories have touched all of us over the years. As a result of hearing them, the block captains have left the meeting feeling to continue to go the extra step in caring for their neighbor, sharing meals with neighbors, hanging "goodie" bags on their doors, etc. The stories which we have listed under each point of the art of caring are wonderful "starters" for the talks at our meeting and hopefully can be of use.

If neighbors were sick, or if block captains were feeling discouraged, we tried to find the stories or quotes or poems that helped them at that moment and encouraged them to still reach out to their neighbor and never give up. Also sometimes we tell true stories about the mayor and the trustees or department heads because we want them to see how much their priority of serving had made a difference and provided an example to all of us. The point of the talk is to give an injection of hope, reminding each captain that they are making a difference. Then, over time, they begin to see themselves as an "army of angels", as our former mayor often calls them. They are in the trenches daily, reaching out in every little way to help their neighbors.

Sample Agenda for Block Captain Meeting

Mayor's Committee of Neighborhood Services

Tuesday March 24, 2009

7:30pm

Community Room

AGENDA

1. Mayor's Welcoming Remarks
2. Block Captain Feedback
3. Carol's Feedback
4. Presentation of Angel Award
5. Questions & Answers with the Mayor



*"There is no better exercise
for your heart than reaching
down and helping to lift
someone up."*

Bernard Meltzer

SAMPLE TALK for Block Captains Neighborhood Services Meeting by the Coordinator

As I walk around town at night, I am often surprised by bursts of light illuminating the fronts of various houses. I know it is just the motion sensors doing their thing, but I never know when they will come on. It's kind of a game for me...to be ready for the light to turn on. This experience made me think of the block captains and of our town. You probably are wondering why.

Because I thought how different the world would be if each of us looked at our neighbors, one by one, in each moment, really looked at them-- then our eyes would become like "caring sensors' Let me explain what I mean. Many years ago, a captain was driving along 23rd St., looking at houses on the block, when she saw a woman in the rear view mirror. The woman seemed to sway and then she fell. Immediately, the captain stopped her car, another person rushed from his house, another went to call 911. One brought a blanket to keep her warm. The captain and the others tried to find out from her where she lived. They worked together- they were all on the lookout to help at a moment's notice. The woman did not feel afraid and they were able to help her recall her address and have the ambulance take her home.

A few years ago, in the early morning, a captain was driving down Eighth Avenue, rushing home to her children. Out of the corner of her eye, she thought she saw a petite older lady crawling on the sidewalk toward a house. She could not believe it and she stopped her car. She found that the lady had fallen, was bleeding, and needed help to get back into her home. That encounter led to about four years of visits, of listening, of the lady cooking for the family of the captain. The relationship lasted until she had to move to a nursing home. But it all began because the captain was looking around while she drove home; she was ready to reach out if needed, her caring sensor was on.

Another day, not so long ago, a small child came to North Riverside library with a cake. He wanted to give it to a clerk there who shared his birthday. When the rest of the staff heard, for a minute, they all stopped what they were doing and all together,, with the little boy, sang happy birthday to the lady. Why- because they saw a chance to be like family, and that was more important than continuing their work for that moment.

Just a couple of weeks ago, our village clerk went out to visit a long time resident, who now lived alone. She wanted to interview her on the "old days" in town, but she also thought of how to make this lady happy. And, you know what, she brought her a bouquet of flowers! The lady told her friends about this for days afterwards. This extra touch of kindness had brightened her day.

Last, but not least, I need to tell you about the captain and village officials who helped my family while I was in the hospital. The captain who worked at the hospital came to my room to see what I needed and brought a notepad and special soaps. She knew my uncle was also in the same hospital and went to visit him. She talked to him for an hour. He became like her uncle too! Then, she went home and cooked a meal for our family, offered to shop, and offered to stay with our son with disabilities. I believe she must have had eyes that were "caring sensors even on the back of her head". There were so many acts of kindness.

We also received the most delicious chili from Sue and the most beautiful flower arrangement I have ever seen from the Mayor and Village Board. To me, all these actions speak louder than any words because, as the late Chiara Lubich, once said, "... each of us will find that we possess inexhaustible treasures: our free time, our love, our smile, our advice, our peace, our words" are not just like those motion sensors that turn on in the dark of night.

We are the "caring sensors" that are ready light up the heart of our neighbor 24/7 because, in our neighbor we see, not just a neighbor, but a brother, a sister, a mother, a father. We see all as part of one family and our neighbor in turn is able to carry this light to another ,and that person to another ,and, then, to another...until one day our whole town will be lit with acts of caring, and you will know that you, each of you, helped it all to begin.



CHAPTER 3: - ACTIVITIES WHICH ASSIST NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

1. Welcome Bag-

A canvas bag, is given personally by block captains, to every new resident on his/her block within two months of moving in. The recreation department prepares these and they are delivered by area representatives to their block captains. If the residents are not home, the captain leaves a note saying they were sorry they had not reached them and ask them to call their phone number to receive theirs.

Welcome Bag Contents

It is different each time but we normally put in:

Recycling bags

Recreation book

Emergency Card with the important numbers on it(with magnet for easy placement)

Village Newsletter

Information from local organizations or churches

911 phone sticker

Any give-a-ways- at this time a ruler, pen, fly swatter

Info from Commonwealth Edison

Any current event handouts (left over from block captain distribution)

Calendar of Events in Village

2.Christmas Trees

The Village budgets enough to purchase 120 four-inch decorated live Christmas trees. Block captains pick one up in early December and choose an individual or family on their block to receive it. Sometimes the family has gone through a hospitalization, the death of a loved one, or a prolonged illness. Sometime the tree goes to a new resident, or to a family that has just welcomed a new baby. Each captain is given only one tree and each one usually 'knows' the one they want to give it to. However, they can request up to two extra if they feel there are more on their block that would appreciate this gift. The tree is then given to the family, telling them that they were one of the 120 chosen to receive this gift from the Village for that year.

The block captains share with area representatives or coordinator all the positive feedback, the joys, and the hugs. These "stories" are shared at the meetings or in a special "block captain" newsletter so the captains are given positive encouragement so as not to get discouraged.

Christmas Tree Stories

- One woman who in her past had received holiday trees as gifts from her father and father-in-law was sad because in the past they had been stolen. The woman had just gone to reunion and was thinking of the past and these relatives. When the captain gave her the tree, she started crying. The Captain asked if she was okay. She said they were tears of joy because now she felt so close to these relatives again.
- One captain decided to give a tree to a family experiencing serious illness. They were new residents and had been so pleased with the outpouring of generosity the village and neighbors have been giving them. When the captain stopped there, the woman of the house was so excited to know that she was chosen. She told her that her friends and family don't believe how wonderful the village has been to them. It's like "Mayberry". She gave her a hug and a huge thank you and holiday wishes too.
- A woman called and asked why the village had been so rude on the phone. We tried to listen and understand. Finally, we asked which department she had called--what number? She gave us the phone number and it was not that of the village at all! There had been a misprint in newspaper. So we asked her what she had needed. Then we thought to ask if she would like a tree. She was so happy because she had no decorations at all. The wrong phone number was the right one in the end.
- One block captain went over to deliver a tree to a new resident but no one was home. The next day she went over to the house again but still no one. She went a third time and the man answered and said that this was a special day for him. . It was the perfect time to deliver the tree!!

3.Sharing Board

Last year, we decided to place a sharing board on the wall in the village hall. People share their needs and wants, without phone numbers. People can call the village if they see something they need and we match the people with needs. We also list local volunteer opportunities, in addition to village-wide food drives and shoe drives.

Sharing Board--PERFECT MATCHES(excerpts from our village newsletter)

- One older couple requested a turkey. The next day, the village called to ask if anyone could use a turkey that was donated. The couple was so grateful and so surprised.
- One resident wished she could have cans of Ensure. A week later, a captain emailed that someone at her workplace was giving away a case of Ensure! The resident was amazed.

- The "Traveling Box of Cookies"—Mary gave a 3-pound box of brand name cookies to her friend Joan. Joan loved the cookies but thought that Make a Difference Day was the perfect day to share them. So she called Jean who had three growing sons. One of the boys came over and took the cookies back to his home. But Jean thought, "How can I keep these cookies just for myself and my family?" So she turned around and called over the neighborhood children, who helped eat up the box of cookies. And that is how a 3-pound box of cookies traveled through North Riverside making many people happy!

4. Neighbor Handouts

We try to do our yearly village events calendar in a handout form so people are aware of what is going on. Also we try to include health resources, safety when leaving home unattended. etc. There is always a half sheet of paper attached where the captain writes his/her name, address, and phone number. He/she then says to be sure to call him/her if problems or concerns because we want them to know that they are never alone without help.

We also have those in school distribute handouts to those blocks without captains. There is an insert asking if they would like to be a captain and help their neighbors.

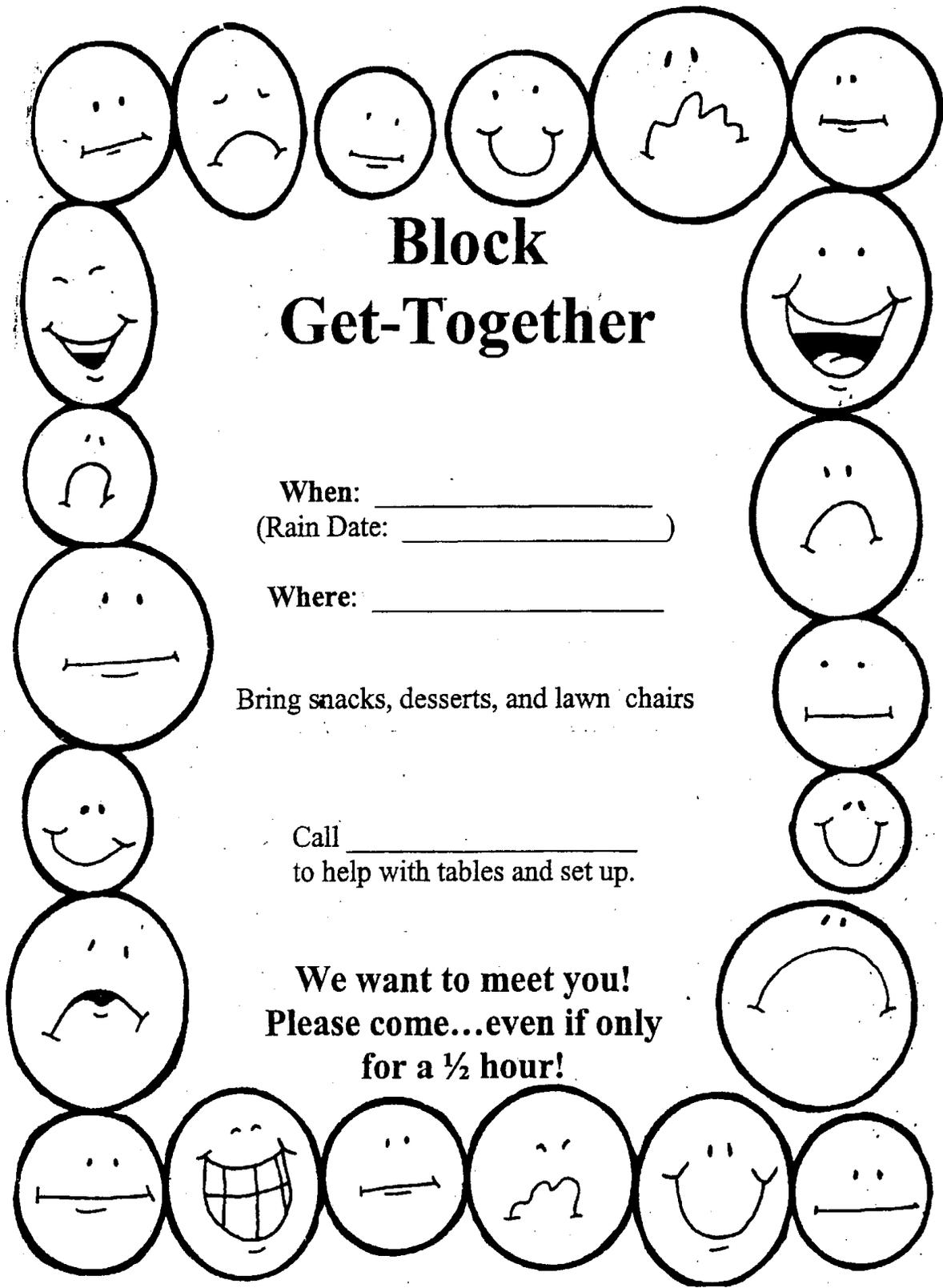
Importance of Handouts

We try to see each person on block once a year. Once, a person died and we found only one thing left at her apartment. It was the list of all emergency numbers, and a note from block captain with his number. She had lived alone but knew there was someone who cared.

5. Block Parties and Block Garage Sales-

In the summer, the block captains distribute a sheet asking neighbors if they want to get together for a block party or have a block garage sale. We also told them not to feel bad if they don't get many replies. One of the block captains, a young mother said, "No, just start even with two people and then it can grow the following year."

So even if only two return the slips, the captain still may have informal get together with snacks and just bring lawn chairs. They try to find some way to put people together, to help them get to know their neighbors.



Block Get-Together

When: _____
(Rain Date: _____)

Where: _____

Bring snacks, desserts, and lawn chairs

Call _____
to help with tables and set up.

We want to meet you!
Please come...even if only
for a ½ hour!

Block Party Stories We Heard from the Captains

- I asked my neighbor if she would help me because I knew I could not do a big organization thing, but everything fell apart. The woman who was going to print up announcement could not do it. But we still decided to do it even for a small number. We thought to have a get acquainted party where people just bring a lawn chair, a munchie and sit from 2-4 p.m. at the end of one of the blocks, So that is what we did. We called neighbors personally that morning and they came. The neighbors sang for one who had just turned 75 and another who was 80 a week before. In the end, there were 26 adults and seven kids and the young guys enjoyed it so much they want to do a bigger and better one next year. Neighbors did not go home until an hour after it was supposed to end, and they were so happy. They shared leftovers with all those who could not come.
- Country Club lane had its 1st block party in YEARS. Neighbors who have been here for years met other neighbors who have been here for years—as well as meeting the new kids on the block. The rain stopped just in time to let up set up for the night and we had a Fantastic evening. We even made plans to do this bigger next year as well as plan a united block garage sale for the spring.



- At first I was glad the block party was canceled due to rain because I was tired. But, when we called those who were coming to tell them the rain had caused cancellation, one elderly couple who were in poor health offered their basement so the neighbors could still come. I was surprised because the lady could hardly ever go down in the basement and sometimes needed oxygen just to come up the steps. But they insisted. I called the other neighbors who were also touched, as I was, by their generosity. I even started making a casserole and baking cookies. Some neighbors went to help set up, 19 came and we had Chinese, Spanish, and American food. A couple of those present took two plates of food over to a couple could not come since the wife has dementia and husband 's back hurt very much. All shared the leftovers and all took home samples of food. There was such a feeling of family and it happened all because one act of generosity, one act of kindness. It was an amazing block "basement" party!
- One captain, whose block was not open to a party, instead wrote a creative letter telling all to meet in front a person's house to say goodbye to an old friend. The last line talked about an old tree being cut down. Three people came and sat and watched and talked. The "old friend", the Tree had brought some neighbors together.



6. Our Kindness Card

This is given to captains to give to workers in stores, post offices, etc, throughout our town.

Thanks for being kind to me today,
Please pass this on to someone
Who helps you along the way!



7. Angel Awards

Our village gives angel awards when we feel that someone in our community has done something which serves the entire community in a special way. An angel pin is also given to the recipient. We also note angel stories in our newsletter when we discover someone going out of his/her way to assist a neighbor.

Some examples of the types of Angel Awards we would present:

- A man who snow plowed his block and the next, and then put snowplow into car and drove around town helping where it was not shoveled after the blizzard.
- A woman called to offer her attic full of Avon supplies for the homebound baskets at Christmas. She saw they were needed from the page we write in newsletter. Because of her generosity, we were able to give something for each basket and the nursing home at gifts left over for staff.

EXAMPLE: Angel Award Certificate

This Angel Award is presented to

Name of Recipient



*The 2010 Richard N. Scheck Angel Award is being presented to **Recipient's Name**, in recognition of his/her outstanding service to his neighbors, for his/her unselfish donation of time to those in need, and for setting an example for other families in our Village on how to reach out to others to make a difference in our community.*

Mayor _____

Dated _____

8. Village Newsletter

We are able to share resources, needs, and “angel” stories in our quarterly newsletter, We have been told that residents really enjoy reading them. The purpose is to give residents outside of our committee ideas on how to help their neighbors. Here are three copies of our page in the newsletter:

Example 1--

Neighborhood Services

by Coordinator Carol Spale & block captains
Information and Building Blocks of Kindness

PEACE ON EARTH TO PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL

We might wonder if there can be peace in our world with war, hatred, shootings, neighbors intolerant of neighbors? But there is a way each one of us can keep the spirit of Christmas alive every day of the year. There is a way each one of us, no matter who we are, can make a difference in our corner of the world. It's as simple as looking outside of yourself and living the Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you would want them to do to you.* It is the basis of our Neighborhood Services Committee and what our block captains try to live and share each day. These are the 4 points of the Art of Caring:

1. Be the first to reach out
2. Reach out to every person (grouchy included)
3. Be one with people, sharing joys and sorrows as if they were your own
4. Be concrete in helping (contact your captain, the Village or me to help)

These residents really live the 4 Points of the Art of Caring

- ❖ The man who was happy to drive a resident he didn't even know to a far western suburb for a doctor's appointment.
- ❖ The woman who is part of a church group that tries to make others happy: making jello for a disabled man; bringing food to a neighbor; collecting cans of soup and cereals for the local food pantry; visiting the homebound.
- ❖ The lady who brought a holiday dinner for a neighbor who was alone.
- ❖ One woman, who truly lived the Golden Rule, made a huge difference in her apartment building in town. She protected the handicapped space for a disabled young tenant so no one would park there; she fasted on Thanksgiving but made and brought a turkey dinner to her neighbors; she helped a neighbor who suffered from Alzheimer's; she

baked cookies for our Post Office employees each Christmas; she invited neighbors to her apartment for a home-cooked, delicious meal, helping them to get to know each other.

Her name was Marie and about a year ago, I visited her in the Intensive Care Unit; a week later, when she died, I realized we had all lost someone who made the world better with her one life. It was my first time attending a Muslim funeral and that day I felt that all of us who knew Marie were so very lucky—she was an example of a person of good will who brought peace into her corner of the world every single day.

share the gift
of giving

Boxes are set up at the Village Commons...
Do you have any of these items you can donate?

There are many people who need things right before our eyes.

Detailed lists are available at the Village but hopefully by glancing at the list below many of us can find something among these causes to donate.

Sweats for Vets. Hines Hospital needs sweatpants and sweatshirts for veterans.

Ronald McDonald House near Loyola. Disinfectant wipes and paper towels are on their "wish list" as well as pop tabs from empty cans.

Share Your Soles welcomes shoes in good shape for all ages!

Holiday Toy Drive. New toys, puzzles, gift cards from Target, Wal-Mart, McDonald's for Constance Morris House for Abused Women and Children in LaGrange.

Betty Scheck Senior Center. On 17th Avenue where Rascal's was located, the Center needs games such as Uno, soaks, mittens, gloves, flashlights, tennis balls, glue, glitter, new magazines and more for its seniors.

Winter Coat Drive. Gently-worn or new for ages Kindergarten to 8th grade.

Food Pantry. Non perishable foods for our residents. Also, Riverside Presbyterian Church, 116 Barrypoint Road in Riverside collects food items on a weekly basis every Wednesday from Noon until 1 pm.

Homebound Neighbors. Bring lotions, jewelry, washcloths, beanie-type animals, or other small stocking stuffer items to Carol Spale, 2300 5th Avenue (side door) to be used in baskets that will be delivered to homebound friends.

At the Library across the street. You can offer books, make monetary donations specified for books for adults and/or children. You can even buy a book to commemorate a child's birth or as a memorial for someone who has died. Stop in the Library and ask the staff for all the details.

FAMILIES
IN NEED

11

Neighborhood Services and the North Riverside Recreation Department invite you to Adopt A Family in town this holiday season. By adopting one of our very own neighbors, you can buy presents on their wish list, gift cards for groceries or even gas cards. Call Sue at 442-5515 or Carol at 447-4932 to learn more about how you can help a neighbor who is experiencing serious hardship this year.

Just a reminder: Job opportunities and fair listings are always available at the Commons on the table or at the Library. Don't forget to check the Sharing Board posted at the Rec Department for items needed or to be given away.

Example 2

Neighborhood Services

by Coordinator Carol Spale & block captains
Information and Building Blocks of Kindness

Welcome, Nick and Frank!
Our newest block captains!

Amazing Stories

This summer, we received many calls from residents wanting to give items away. One longtime resident gave away all of his medical equipment before moving. A daughter offered her late mother's collection of craft supplies, which were gratefully accepted by the Village preschool and a Native American Indian reservation. Another presented a beautiful American flag to an ex-Marine who proudly displays it. Each day brought more giving: socks, notecards, pens, all kinds of items were given away.

But my favorite story began when our own doorbell rang. A young man delivered two extra large pizzas leftover from an event; five minutes later, the doorbell rang again—this time, a neighbor with delicious homegrown tomatoes to share. We offered her some pizza and called another family in town and surprised them with the other pizza. Later that night, after our son helped a friend move, he was given some pizza to bring home. It seemed the more we gave away, the more good things kept coming back to us.

If you need anything or have items to give away, call Carol at 447-4932 so it can be posted on the Sharing Board just outside the Rec Department.

Even children can volunteer!

Hanson Center, Barr Ridge.
Needs individuals ages 13 and up to work with their horses, grooming, cleaning barns, feeding, walking or training dogs to work with individuals with disabilities. Call 630-325-5330.

Community Support Services

For the developmentally disabled and their families. Serving more than 550 children, adults and seniors in 53 communities. Call 708-354-4547 or www.communitysupportservices.org.

Websites you can use

www.indeed.com compiles job listings from numerous sites and www.damngood.com will help you create an effective resume for job hunting.

www.mortonarb.org. Everything you always wanted to know about the Morton Arboretum in Lisle. Perfect for autumn visits!

www.cpsc.org. Click on this site for the latest on child toy recalls.

www.medlineplus.gov offers a wealth of information on health topics.

www.firststreet.com is an online catalog for boomers and beyond and those with arthritis, vision problems, etc. Call 1-800-704-1210.

Old-fashioned remedies...

Grease cutter/sink shiner. Sprinkle cloth with liquid soap and add some baking soda, then rub!

"Dry clean" your dog in the winter by rubbing baking soda in the fur then brushing with an old hair brush.

White vinegar and water will take out most carpet and furniture stains. Check for color first.

**You've Earned Wings
and made our world better...**

Did you see them flying around North Riverside? Not the 17-year cicadas or the Betty Scheck 5K Shuffle runners, but our town's busy angels! Maybe you will recognize them now—or maybe you were one of them.

Caterer Angel. This resident rang his neighbor's doorbell and surprised the family with three complete dinners from a local restaurant!

Ticket Angel. This angel found out her neighbors had a houseful of guests from out of town and generously shared Zoo guest passes with them!

Anniversary Angel. This public official remembered it was a North Riverside couple's wedding anniversary and what did he do? He surprised them with a beautiful flower arrangement delivered right to their home.

Muscle Men Angels. These two angels helped their neighbor by lifting a 200-lb. cement block from a car's trunk up the steps to the base of the front door!

Song and Dance Angels. These two co-workers in a public building in our town have a ready smile and even a little dance for residents. Some have said that they just stop in to see them whenever they are sad because they always cheer them up!

Homebound?

M.D. at Home. Doctor visits at your home at six-week intervals, x-rays, blood tests; Medicare covered. No hospital affiliation. Call 866-632-8466.

Dentistry for the Handicapped. Dentist comes to your home for cleanings and simple procedures. Call 312-440-8976.

Need Help at Home?
Need meals on wheels? Cleaning help? Contact Linda Carey at Southwest Council on Aging at 708-354-4547.

Make an appointment to learn about available resources or talk to her in person on the first Wednesday of each month when she visits the Commons.

Or, contact Carol Spale at 447-4932 for additional ideas on help at home.

11



Example 3

Neighborhood Services

by Coordinator Carol Spale & block captains
Information and Building Blocks of Kindness

PEACE ON EARTH TO MEN OF GOOD WILL...

This Christmas message has echoed through the ages, touching many, many hearts. I thought about these words when I received the following print-out from Carole, one of our block captains, and I would like to share it with you:

THE GOLDEN RULE

Buddhism: Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

Christianity: All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Confucianism: Surely it is the maxim of loving—kindness. Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.

Islam: No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not to your fellowman. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.

Taoism: Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.

As I read and re-read the Golden Rule said in different ways (but always the same), I realized that living this Rule is the KEY to peace on Earth. Can you imagine a world where every person tries every day to treat every neighbor as he or she wants to be treated?

We would be the first to wave or smile at a grouchy neighbor because that's what we would want if we were sad...

We would use our free time to visit the homebound or make calls or write to those alone because that's what we would want if we were unable to get around...

We would reach out to a classmate or a co-worker who wasn't popular or who was rejected because that's what we would want if we felt we had no friends...

Online resources

www.thehungersite.com. Just by clicking on, you give a donation. Free.

www.locksoflove.org. Donate hair for cancer patients.

www.wish.org. Make-A-Wish.

www.volunteermatch.com. Virtual volunteer opportunities you can do from home.

www.lets saythanks.com. Email postcards to soldiers in Iraq.

Here's how you can give— right here at the Commons

• Hines Veterans Clothing Drive. Bring men's clothes, jackets, new underwear and socks to the Commons by December 21. Call Dave Ross at 447-4932 for home pick-up.

• Books for the Bayou. Drop off gently-used children's books for Louisiana. Call 447-4932 for pick-up.

• Share your soles. Drop off gently-used children's shoes only; they will be shipped around the world. Also needed for this drive: laundry detergent, Lysol spray and Clorox wipes, shoelaces, shoe polish, heavy-duty trash bags.

• Non-perishable food for the food pantry.

• Eyeglasses for the Lions Club.

• Drop off old cell phones for the Rec Preschool Program.

• Drop off lotions, jewelry and miscellaneous sundries for homebound Christmas baskets by December 16. Call Carol at 447-4932 for details.

• Ask about the Komarek Giving Tree at the Rec Department.

Golden "Bear"

A Golden Rule story heard recently...

A resident was given a soft, stuffed bear for her birthday by friends. Not long after, she had an operation which required a long, painful recovery but looking at the bear each day brought her great comfort, like an understanding friend.

When she returned to health, she gave her bear to a lady who was not well with the understanding that when she recovered, the bear would be given to another resident who needed a "friend" and that person, when better, would give it to another so the little bear would help many over time and become a real "community care bear" in our little village with the very big heart.

If you need help in some way or you know of a neighbor who could use a hand, contact Carol Spale at 447-4932.



**You've Earned Wings
and made our world better...**

Have you seen them flying around North Riverside? They're our angels! Starbucks Angels bring hot and delicious coffee to tired people around town. Sharing Angels have given exercise machines, furniture and clothes to help our residents.

And a little Dog Angel has been carried around to homebound residents, licking their faces and lighting up their lives.

9. The Love Cube

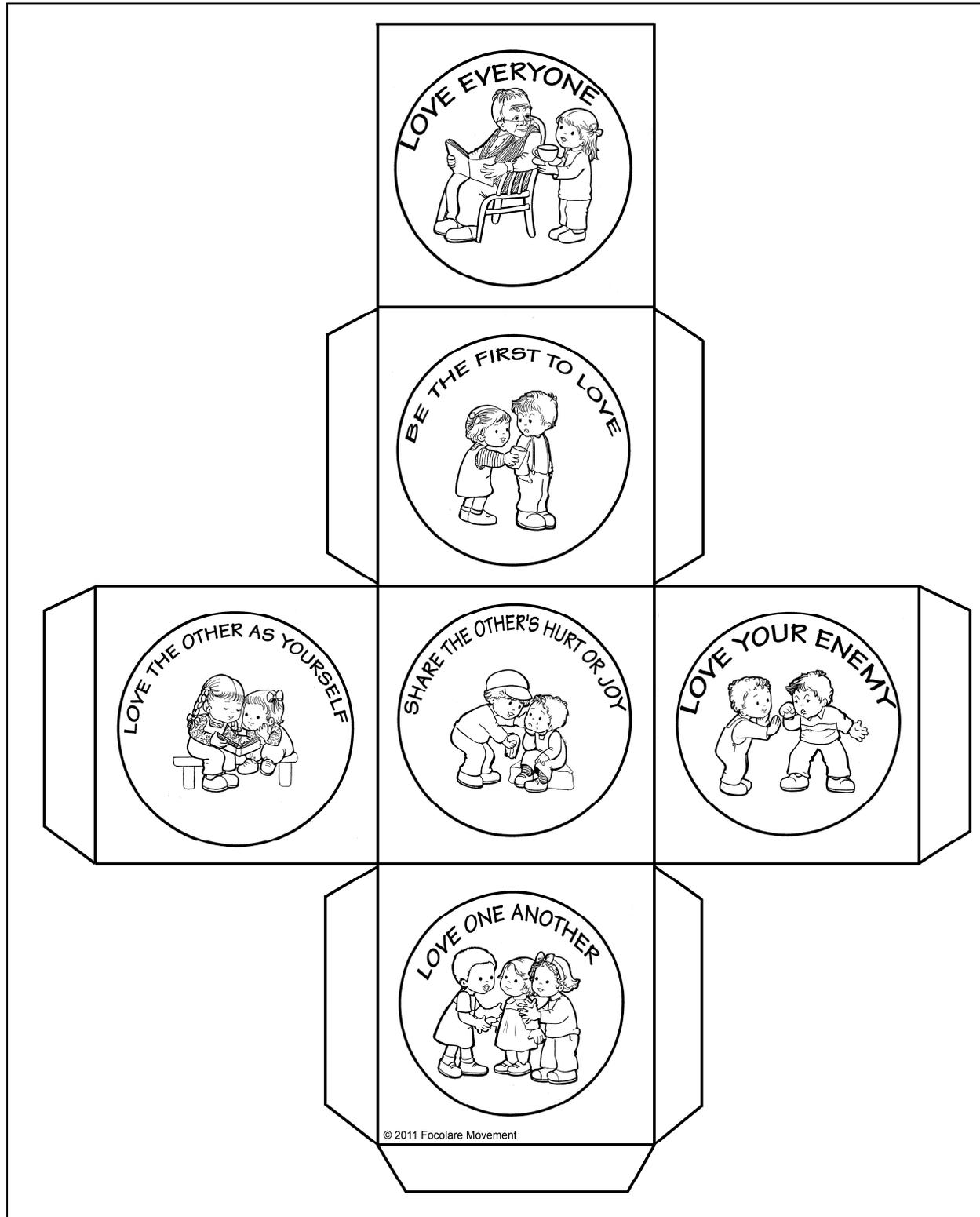
This is a tool used in many schools throughout the world in which the points of the Art of Loving (called the Art of Caring in N. Riverside) are put into a cube form and thrown by children who then decide to live the point which lands side up.

We had the love cube, which has the points of the art of loving on each side, given to the captains at one meeting and we asked them to throw it. Then told them they had to live what landed on top. There was a gasp throughout the room but we tried it. In one newsletter, we printed the stories printed above of children in town who lived the golden rule when they threw their love cubes.

Children's Experiences

- **"Do unto others"**
Glen 5 1/2 years old: His sister Jenna (3) and Glen were brushing their teeth. Glen was finished first so when he was done rinsing his teeth, he filled the cup up with water for his sister.
- **"Love one another"**
Nathan 5 years old: Loves to go to the store with dad but cannot leave the store without getting something for his 3 year brother Aaron or mom.
- **"Love one another"**
As we were waiting for the parade for the 1244th Transport Company to return to NR on 7/30, Jenna (3) and Glen (5 1/2) were given balloons to celebrate their return home from Iraq. Jenna's balloon flew away so Glen said he'd share his balloon and let her hold his.

EXAMPLE OF THE LOVE CUBE



Summary:

The Results of Living Art of Caring Over These Years

Printed in: Living City Magazine May 2007 —

Winner of 2008 the Knights of Columbus' McGivney Award for Volunteerism Journalism — Third Place

The Village With a Caring Heart North Riverside, Illinois

Citizens and politicians around the world are focusing their efforts on renewing their cities, towns and villages with the spirituality of unity. This new monthly section will highlight success stories as inspiration for action.

By Carol Spale

In 1979 our family moved to the village of North Riverside, a suburb of about 6,000 near Chicago. During this time, our son David, who was severely disabled, required constant attention, including an involved physical therapy program that required three people at a time in order to move his arms and legs so that he could be able to walk.

We were overwhelmed by the natural goodness of our neighbors. A core group of about 20 neighbors alternated coming seven days a week, twice a day, for six years. Even the firemen from our town helped out on weekends and holidays.

I felt such gratitude that I asked God to show our family a way to give back to this town and its residents. Not long after this, the mayor of North Riverside, Richard Scheck, wrote a letter to all residents asking for ideas for his new Committee of Neighborhood Services program. I answered, and soon afterward the mayor asked me to be its coordinator.

There was no blueprint for our program. There were 72 block captains, each responsible for one block of North Riverside. I proposed that the block captains try to make each block like a family, where no one would feel alone. The mayor liked my idea.

At that time, Chiara Lubich had begun talking about the "art of loving." It seemed that these principles could be a basis for creating a sense of family in North Riverside. I adapted the art of loving into four points, which I called the Art of Caring:

1. Be first to reach out to others.
2. Reach out to everyone.
3. Care concretely.
4. Be one with joys and sorrows.

My plan was that during each captains' meeting, I would take one of the points and illustrate it by using an experience that one of the block captains had shared with me. At first, I had to use stories based on my own experiences and those of my husband Frank, or quotations from famous people like Mother Teresa, or stories from magazines or newspapers that told of people living the Golden Rule. After a couple of years, however, some of the block captains themselves started sharing what they had done.

One of the first experiences shared by a captain was about a new resident of the block whose dogs were left outside barking. Instead of complaining to the police, the captain and the neighbors tried to "love their enemies" by reaching out to the dog owner, baking cookies for her and even helping her retrieve her dogs when they escaped out of the yard. Only then did they approach her with their concerns about how the constant barking was affecting the newborn baby on the block. Many of the other captains said they were touched by how much they had tried to love without causing a confrontation.

These days, to "be first to reach out," the block captains give welcome bags to new residents, sometimes with homemade cookies, and small live decorated trees at Christmas. One block captain decided to give one of these trees to a man who had just been sent to a nursing home. When his wife brought him the tree from the mayor and the village, he could not believe he had been chosen for this gift. Two months later, this man died, but the wife told us how much the little tree had meant and how serene his departure had been.

To "reach out to everyone" the captains knock on everyone's door on their block, even those hard to get along with. For example, on one particular block, there was a couple who for three years running had not attended the annual block party. When they finally did turn out, all the neighbors gave them a round of applause.

To "care concretely," we distribute information packets targeted to specific groups, such as seniors and families. One time, a captain who was delivering the information packets discovered an older couple who had no working stove. When we told the mayor, the mayor bought a stove for them with his own money.

To "be one with joys and sorrows," captains take interest in people, especially those experiencing personal suffering. We send cards, bring food, listen to people's troubles. We use e-mails to communicate special needs.

By practicing the Art of Caring, we started to build an overall network that today truly covers this town. On a regular basis, some captains even do extra by volunteering to drive people in town to doctors, or shopping for groceries for the homebound.

The mayor and the trustees themselves have also put the Art of Caring into practice, so I started to share stories of their acts of kindness during the captains meetings. For example, at one point, we had a block captain from another political party present and the mayor welcomed that person publicly and went beyond the interests of his own party.

I pointed out how the mayor and trustees saw politics as a way to serve their neighbor. They were surprised to see themselves from this perspective, being "first to reach out" or "sharing joys and sorrows." It amazed me to see how deeply they were touched by this.

Then I was asked to write a page in our quarterly village newsletter. I decided to share "angel stories," in which unnamed "angels" would do acts of caring for others in the town. For example, one angel visited sick people, bringing everyone a rose; another grew tomatoes and shared them with her neighbors. An 88-year-old angel cut down a little tree for a widow who feared it would break her gutters.

Now the mayor has started giving an "angel award." He also suggested making appreciation cards, which he and the area representatives would sign and we would send to people whom we had heard had tried to help their neighbors, going the extra mile.

In one newsletter we even printed stories of children in town and how they lived the Golden Rule when they rolled the "Cube of Love" which children in the Focolare Movement use daily. Each side of the cube has one of the points of the art of loving. At a captains' meeting soon afterward, I took a risk and gave cubes to the captains and asked them to roll them (I even gave one to the mayor). Then I told them they had to live what landed on top!

Then at a later meeting of the mayor and the area representatives, one member named Joe was complaining about someone else. The mayor asked me if I had a cube with me, which I did, and told me to give it to Joe. Joe rolled the cube, which said "love your enemies." Joe kept silent and did not say another word.

North Riverside has even extended the Art of Caring to other towns. As I made contact with others outside of town to learn about their resources, we started to build relationships with these other towns. We saw that we had to love the other towns as our own.

I truly believe that the art of loving can transform a town from top to bottom. These four points of the art of loving have created such a sense of family that people even invite relatives to move here. People driving around our town tell me they feel such peace. What touches my heart most is what one resident said a few months ago: "I am so lucky to live in a village with a caring heart."

Reprinted with permission from Living City of the Focolare Movement
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