

# COMMUNITY BUILDING

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

### *Ideas for Action*

- ❖ **Conduct neutral forums** to discuss issues without the requirement of a vote. These would ideally allow members to provide feedback. These should be conducted by trained facilitators.
- ❖ **Develop a town website or public directory** of who's who and what's what in all areas of the community. It could include a list of volunteer organizations, how town government works, educational information about the responsibility of volunteering, and who needs volunteers. Put the directory on video and circulate at the local library and to video stores in the community.
- ❖ **Designate specific sites as Community Bulletin Boards** where people can post information about what is happening and place in heavily used areas.
- ❖ **Organize a volunteer fair** to highlight volunteer activities in the community.
- ❖ **Use Old Home Days** as an information vehicle for organizations and activities in town.
- ❖ **Use breaks at Town Meetings** as a time for organizations to showcase their work, ask for volunteers, and distribute information about the community.
- ❖ **Create a Civic Association** to coordinate activities across the various interest groups in town.
- ❖ **Require time for public comment** at the beginning of all public meetings.
- ❖ **Create a community ombudsman or clearinghouse for information.** Make it formal and institutionalized so there is one resource to serve the entire community. Here community members would expect to receive their information about what is happening and all organizations would provide information. The media would contact this source for researching community activities.
- ❖ **Train people on how to use the media effectively** and media that accessibility is a bottom-up responsibility. It is up to each individual to supply our information.

- ❖ **Require public officials to publish agendas, minutes and votes of all public meetings.** Meeting could also be televised or taped for review by those unable to attend. Publish regular articles and reports in local papers about all board activities.
- ❖ **Hold meetings in accessible locations and have standard dates and times.** Consider moving meetings to appropriate locations, such as a mobile home park if mobile homes are a topic of discussion at the meeting.
- ❖ **Produce a video about the town and its history.** Place it at the local library, in video stores, schools and other locations for easy access.
- ❖ **Encourage letters to the editor.** A few letters on one subject (positive or negative) are considered worth listening to by the media.
- ❖ **Place suggestion boxes around town** for people unable to attend meetings to share an idea or information.
- ❖ **Initiate a newsletter exchange.** Send your organizational newsletter to other organizations at functions around the community.
- ❖ **Institute a speaker bureau** to arrange for people to speak about various issues or organizations at functions around the community.
- ❖ **Conduct summer town meetings** for tourist areas so property owners and summer residents may become a more viable part of the community.
- ❖ **Develop cable television access** for local community activities.
- ❖ **Conduct activities between or among various groups.** While participating in an activity together, they will learn about what each other's group does and share information.
- ❖ **Make the town report widely accessible.** Place it on the town website. If it can't be mailed to every home, make multiple copies of it available in the library or other public places, to be checked out by residents.
- ❖ **Schedule regular brown bag lunches with elected officials** to informally share ideas, hear what's going on in the community, and have the opportunity for elected and appointed officials to hear from their constituents.
- ❖ **Hand out community information cards** to people when they pay their taxes or register their cars.
- ❖ **Have a telephone hotline** for people to get information on how to access resources or information about an event or issues important in town at the moment.

- ❖ **Develop a central calendar of events** widely distributed throughout town and on the website.
- ❖ **Develop a data base of information about the community and its services.** Make it easily updated and widely available to groups, organizations, or residents. Place it on the website.
- ❖ **Get local papers to commit to specific space for community news.**
- ❖ **Before elections, publish ballots and explain what various votes will mean.**
- ❖ **Make information available where people congregate** – in malls, coffee shops, at work, churches, real estate agents, or at car registration sites. Print information on the back of tax bills, bank statements, utility bills, or other regularly distributed pieces of information.
- ❖ **Personal Contact.** Share information one-on-one. Don't assume because you know a piece of information your neighbor or friend is aware of it.

**Resources:**

Granite State Civic Profile Book of Ideas, The Governor's Commission on New Hampshire in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.