

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

If members of small communities would work together to help each other with a number of services, small communities could learn to be more self-sufficient (less dependent on outsiders), could improve pride and safety in their community, and improve the quality of life for themselves. Below are a few ideas of how communities could accomplish this.

1) Establish a **“Help Hotline”** - Have a committee determine who in the community would be appropriate, qualified, and willing to be contacted to help others in the community with certain needs or problems. Develop a list of names, phone numbers, and topics to distribute to members in the community. Also list whether or not there is a charge for listed services. List topics, contact names and numbers as: Anger Control - contact John Doe @ 221-1234 (No Charge), Depression - contact Jane Smith @ 221-4321 (No Charge), Local Transportation - contact Billy Bob Belton @ 221-4444 (Ask for a price Quote), etc. Other topics could include: Yard work, Cutting Hair, Small Engine Repair, etc.

2) Put together a **“Community Sitter Service”** - Get a list together of people in the community who would be willing, appropriate and qualified to provide short term or long term sitting and care for children, the elderly, and the disabled. This could give parents and care takers a chance to take a break to get out of the house for a few hours occasionally. These sitters must be thoroughly screened and may need special training to be truly qualified as sitters. They may charge for their services or be willing to trade time with other parents or care takers.

3) Develop a **“Crime Watch Program”** - Encourage members in the community to report criminal or suspicious behavior to local authorities as the police or to chosen local private citizens who can be trusted to handle situations fairly and as discretely as possible. People must learn to treat others with respect, be unselfish, and be forgiving. To do this they need to have people in the community who they can all trust to report their problems to such as a committee of elders. But this committee must be supported and protected by the majority of the community.

4) Begin a **“Job Shadowing Program”** - Have one, or two or a few people watch when qualified people are brought in to repair things, as electrical, plumbing, carpentry, appliances, roofing, small engine repair, construction sites, etc. Before anyone starts hovering over anyone while they work discuss this idea with the worker a day or more before the job is to begin. Do not expect everyone to be willing to participate in such a plan and respect them for their decision if they do not want to participate. But if they are willing to allow others to watch, some people may develop an interest in learning such a trade. Before you start such a program, talk to these repairmen and / or educators and see how people can be trained in such a career. Check into financial aide and assistance programs which can help train people interested in learning such trades.

5) Start a **“Community Vegetable Garden”** - Gardens help people save money on groceries, provide fresh healthy food and some exercise. Get permission to use a plot of land for a large garden. Decide on a few vegetables which could be planted (someone may be willing to donate seed and some supplies). Find volunteers willing to be dedicated to working the garden with the understanding that all who work in the garden or all those involved in other voluntary community services will be allowed to enjoy the vegetables.

All these projects will take some serious planning and discussions before beginning any of them. Consider legal issues and how to handle disputes. When people begin helping others, they become useful members in their society and they begin to feel needed and appreciated. Help them help themselves.