

Building "Community" Within Your Community

Community spirit means pride in a community. Building community spirit creates an emotional equity allowing residents to have an invested interest in their community. The key to having a spirited community doesn't rest in the size or the wealth of the association, but rather the enthusiasm and energy of the residents. Community associations throughout the country rely on resident volunteers who exhibit these traits to bring their community together.

One of the easiest ways to build community spirit is by welcoming new members of the community. Some communities have established a "Welcoming Committee" with volunteers making the initial contact to the new owners. By welcoming new owners to the community, not only does this exhibit the community spirit, it is also an opportunity to invite them to various events being held within the community and it also provides them with a contact point in case they have any questions.

There are many different ways to promote community spirit by engaging residents in various activities throughout the community. Many associations have implemented community traditions revolving around major seasonal events, giving residents something to look forward to each year. Examples of these events include holding an annual 4th of July party or summer picnic at the community swimming pool or park. A good way to incorporate all members is by setting up a pot-luck, with the association providing the paper goods and the residents providing the food and beverages. Communities may set up various activities such as horseshoes, cards, or volleyball giving all the residents an opportunity to meet their neighbors within their community.

Another idea is an Earth Day/Arbor Day celebration which allows residents to join together to beautify their community. During these celebrations, associations should solicit their landscape company or local tree company to allow residents to purchase trees and shrubs at a discounted price. Communities can bring in dumpsters and place them in a central location and ask volunteers to help clean up not only their property but the common areas as well. During these celebrations invite the neighborhood children to help plant new trees and shrubs on the common grounds thus allowing the children to play a part of the community.

Community spirit is also furthered by recognizing all volunteers within the community and recognizing owner accomplishments. The community newsletter or website is an excellent vehicle to recognize different accomplishments or achievements made by community members. It is also important for community associations to recognize their volunteers, giving these individuals the recognition they deserve.

Additional activities that have been successful in different communities include: creating a neighborhood assistance program, such as a babysitting club, where residents offer to provide assistance to others within their community;

- creating programs that partner their association with a local charity or school that allows the residents to give back to their immediate community
- set up different clubs, for example a poker club, giving all the owners an opportunity to join and allows them to get to know their neighbors.

Setting up various events through out the year to bring the community together provides residents with opportunities to become involved in their community. These events help build pride within each community giving owners a place they are happy to come home to.

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