Neighborhood Progress
Through Organized Action

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TEXAS A. & M. COLLEGE SYSTEM

"The measure of a people's civilization is their ability to work together." — Calvin Coolidge

Most of us want to live in the best possible community. The problem is getting together and working on an improvement program.

Families in a neighborhood achieve better living by planning and working together. Many families have renewed their interest in doing all they can for themselves and their community rather than depending on outside agencies for leadership and help.

A community organization is successful when all families and interested groups participate. Such an organization may coordinate interest in the community and provide an excellent means for channeling most programs. The interest of people in improvement programs often is stimulated through taking part in an improvement contest.

Teenagers invariably group around the piano to enjoy songs and fellowship. This quartette is from the Caviness-Emerson Community.
Why Organized Communities Are Successful

Working shoulder-to-shoulder with your neighbors toward the common objective of community betterment builds unity, trust and understanding in a wholesome atmosphere.

Sometimes it is easier to believe that a job can be done if other people are seen doing it. This is true even though problems and needs differ in communities. All over Texas, families have organized for community improvement.

Some groups have centered their interest around social activities, such as recreation, church, school and drives for public facilities. Still other groups began by improving their homes, farms and ranches. Other communities have organized to improve health conditions and services. In every case, as other needs arose, the programs were expanded to include more activities.

Take this example. One community organized to maintain the school building after the school was consolidated. The building was improved and converted into a community center. It had a kitchen, children’s play center and meeting place for the community organization. The playground and picnic areas were provided with lights and a library was set up. Then the people’s interest extended to improving their churches, roads and obtaining telephone service and other public facilities. Their homes and farms were improved as a result.

Definite Steps Important in Building Communities

Community activities first may be the concern of you and your neighbors. If others see the need for action, discussion will lead to fact finding. That will uncover needs and ways of meeting the needs. As the program moves forward, all groups and agencies that can contribute will take part. Goals and plans will emerge and progress can be evaluated.
Needs and Interest of Your Community

Before determining the needs and planning a program for community improvement, decide where and with whom you are working. Determine the boundaries of your community and the number of people in that area. Boundaries of communities sometimes follow trade and service areas, school district lines or county lines.

Talk over the needs of the community with your neighbors. Discuss how a community organization could help meet those needs.

Many communities have determined their needs for strengthening family and community life around some of these objectives:

I. Increasing and Managing Family Income
   A. Soil improvement
   B. Improved crop production and management
   C. Improved pasture and range management
   D. More efficient livestock management
   E. Improved marketing
   F. Improved forest management
   G. Improved management of family income
   H. Storage, home foods and farm crops

II. Improving Health Conditions and Services
    A. Production, conservation and use of food
    B. Clothing selection, use and care
    C. Disease prevention and sanitation
    D. Medical facilities and services
    E. Safety

III. Improving the Home and Farm
     A. Housing and household equipment
     B. Landscaping home grounds
     C. Farm buildings, equipment
     D. Conservation of natural resources
IV. Encouraging Social Participation
   A. Recreation — family and community
   B. Religious life
   C. Education — adults and children
   D. Public facilities and buildings (roads, telephones, fire-fighting equipment, cemeteries)
   E. Helping other communities to organize
   F. Cooperating in country-wide organization

How Is a Neighborhood Organized?

1. If a number of people are interested in improving their community, they may call a general meeting.
2. County extension agents, teachers, pastors, other professional people and leaders from actively organized groups may be invited to point out advantages and opportunities of such an organization.
3. Elect officers (president, vice president, secretary-treasurer) and decide on committees according to the need. See the suggestion in Article 7, Constitution and Bylaws, page 10. The President will appoint a chairman for each standing committee. Special committees are appointed as needed.
4. Before the next meeting the officers and committee chairmen will meet and select members for all committees. Obtain the consent to serve from each person before announcing. If possible have every family represented on some committee.
5. Youth of the neighborhood should be represented in community planning.

Hard work gets good results. These folks are proud of their new community center. (Harmony Community Center)
These homemakers are upholstering furniture for the Pine Forest Community Center.

How Are Programs Planned?

1. Officers and committee chairmen may make up a program and membership committee. The chairman of this group may be designated.

2. Members of each committee then meet and decide on goals. The goals are presented to the entire group for discussion and approval. Programs are planned that will help carry out the goals. (For instance if the committee on "Increasing and Managing the Family Income" finds that better family records should be kept and the group accepts it as one of the goals, a program is planned showing how record-keeping can be improved.)

3. Soon after all committees have selected program topics, the Program Committee reviews them and puts them on the calendar at the most logical time of the year. Each committee should plan and present at least one program during the year that relates to plans made.

4. Committee chairmen report progress from time to time on all goals. The community that progresses is one that plans programs and reaches specific goals.

5. Obtain participation of local and county people for programs.
   a. Successful farmers, ranchers and homemakers can relate favorable experiences or give demonstrations on specific methods.
b. Programs or demonstrations may be presented by 4-H Club teams, other youth groups, adult civic or club groups or members, teachers, pastors and others.

c. Technically trained people may present specialized information.

d. Health and safety campaigns may be developed.

e. Recreation should be a part of every meeting.

f. The committee in charge of a program plans well ahead of time with the speaker or group, announces it in advance, makes necessary preparation for it and presents speakers.

How Are Neighborhood Organizations Kept Active?

1. Elect new officers every year.

2. Plan programs of seasonal interest.

3. Begin and stop on time. Do not let the business and program drag.

4. Have a short business session to discuss phases of community plans. Follow a suggested order of business as found in the Constitution and Bylaws, page—.

5. Plan for variety in programs.


7. Provide recreation for all ages.

8. Check progress every year. The annual report is the responsibility of the secretary and committee chairmen.

9. A community open house once a year at which time neighboring community leaders are invited to participate maintains interest.

10. Enthusiastic publicity helps. Newspapers, farm magazines, radio, television, pictures, tours and exchange programs with other communities are helpful.

11. County-wide organizations of organized neighborhoods strengthen both the community and the county.
Suggested Constitution and Bylaws

ARTICLE I — Name
The name of the organization shall be the organization.

ARTICLE II — Object
The object of the organization shall be to bring families together to promote the welfare of the home, farm or ranch and the community.

ARTICLE III — Membership
Any family living in the community is eligible to membership and entitled to two votes.

ARTICLE IV — Officers
The officers of the organization shall be a president, vice president and secretary-treasurer.

ARTICLE V — Election of Officers
Officers shall be elected for a term of one year. No officer shall be eligible to succeed himself more than one time.

ARTICLE VI — Duties of Officers
President — It shall be the duty of the president to preside at all meetings of the organization, to appoint all necessary

While the parents plan together—the children play together. These youngsters enjoy a nursery corner in the McMahan Community Center.
committees, to call special meetings, and to perform such other duties as pertain to the office.

Vice President — It shall be the duty of the vice president to perform the duties of the president in case of his or her absence or disability.

Secretary — It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep accurate minutes of all the meetings of the organization, to attend to all correspondence, to receive and file properly all important communications and reports.

Treasurer — It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive, hold and disburse all funds belonging to the organization. He or she shall make a full report at each annual meeting or at any time upon the request of the president. The outgoing treasurer shall within one month after the close of the annual meeting turn over to the elected treasurer all money, books and papers of the club in his or her custody. Money paid out by the treasurer must be authorized by a majority vote of the organization; except in an emergency the treasurer is authorized to pay out not more than __________ dollars on a written order for same signed by the president, to be reported at the next meeting of the organization.

ARTICLE VII — Committees

Standing committees of the organization shall be: Program and Membership Committee (officers and chairmen of standing committees), Increasing and Managing Family Income Committee, Improving Health Conditions and Services Committee, Improving the Farm and Home Committee, Encour-
Many times a community's activity centers around the local church. This is the Pine Forest Methodist Church.

aging Social Participation Committee and Finance Committee. All standing committees shall serve during the president's administration. Other committees shall be appointed by the president as their need is found to exist.

ARTICLE VIII — Duties of Committees

The committee for Increasing and Managing Family Income shall try to find ways of increasing the income and to use better the resources that are available.

The Improving Health Conditions and Services Committee shall endeavor to promote an adequate home food supply and encourage safety habits in home and on the farm. This committee should also present information pertaining to health and accident programs.

The Committee for Improving the Farm and Home will present plans for improving the housing, home ground, farm buildings, equipment and fences.

The Committee for Encouraging Social Participation shall attempt to improve recreation, strengthen religious life and increase the educational facilities for all ages in the community. This committee also shall present plans for maintaining better roads, telephones and other public facilities.

The Finance Committee shall have charge of all plans to raise money. All its expenditures shall be under the direction of the organization.

ARTICLE IX — Meetings

Regular meetings shall be held_____. Special meetings may be called by the president.
ARTICLE X — Funds
No membership dues shall be required.

ARTICLE XI — Amendments
This constitution may be amended by a majority vote of a quorum to transact business at any regular meeting of the organization.

ARTICLE XII — Bonding Secretary-Treasurer
The treasurer shall be bonded (or a committee may be appointed to audit the treasurer’s books annually).

BYLAWS
1. A quorum to transact business shall consist of_________ _________. (This should state the number of members which should be less than a majority — an organization of 40 or 50 families should have 15 families represented).

2. Officers should be elected at first meeting of_________ _________. (April).

3. Order of business as follows:
   a. Meeting called to order by president
   b. Opening — prayer, song or game
   c. Roll call (by family)
   d. Minutes read, considered and approved
   e. Letters of interest read
   f. Committee reports (President calls on each committee chairman for reports.)
   g. Old business
   h. New business
   i. Announcements
   j. Program (presented by committee chairman in charge)
   k. Adjournment
   l. Social hour
Other Duties and Privileges of Officers

President (Vice president in president's absence)

1. Preside at meetings
2. Appoint committees (He or she may prefer to appoint all committee chairmen and let them help select committee members.)
3. Meet with committee groups
4. Attend training schools
   Encourage all leaders to do likewise
   Use available guides
5. Plan meetings carefully with program committee

PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR THE YEAR

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<th>Subject or Activity</th>
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When you preside make careful preparations before the meeting.

List items to be on the program with the names of the persons who are responsible for each.

Make arrangements with those presenting the program; find out about speakers, subjects and equipment required.

Be familiar with meeting place to decide:

   Where you will sit (as well as others on program);
   Where you will stand as you speak.

If a microphone is to be used, practice to find best distance.
Enjoy *the privilege of presiding*.

Make your preparation carefully so that you will feel self-confident.
Dress so that you will feel at ease.
Breathe deeply to help yourself relax.
Sit in such a way as to make a pleasing appearance.
Keep your feet flat on the floor or cross feet at ankles.
Listen to what people say.

*Help people enjoy the program.*

Be gracious to those on the platform with you.
Rise to open program and preside.
Wait for the audience to become perfectly quiet. You will feel that they are your friends and you want them to know that you are their friend.
Look at the audience until you see them as individuals before you speak.
Talk as if you were talking to one person.
Speak with enthusiasm and sincerity.
Think of your subject and not yourself.
Listen attentively to each participant. Thank him graciously as he finishes.
At the conclusion of the program assist the guests with their belongings and accompany them from the stage.
Treat them as if they were guests in your home.

*Secretary-Treasurer*

1. Keeps records (minutes) and writes letters. The organization should provide a record book, stationery and postage.

2. The minutes include:
   a. A statement as to whether the meeting is regular, called or adjourned
   b. Name of organization
   c. Date and place
d. Who presided and who was secretary  
e. Whether minutes of the previous meeting were approved as read or corrected  
f. Name of person who made each motion and the motion as made  
g. What was done with the motion  
h. Signature of secretary and president  
3. If offices of secretary-treasurer are combined, keep an accurate account of money intake and use.

**Presentation of Program**

When the committee chairman has charge of the program, these suggestions may help him in introducing speakers:

Talk in advance with the speaker or other person to be introduced to get acquainted and to get the information you need.

Be sure you know the speaker’s name and how to pronounce it, his title, the organization he represents and the subject of his talk.

Have an understanding with the speaker as to how much time he will have on the program.

When introducing the speaker:

Make the introduction quickly.

Make the audience feel that the speaker is important and what he has to say is important.

Give information about the speaker which will show that he is an authority on the subject.

Let the speaker feel that you are glad that he is to speak. Never apologize for the speaker.

Pronounce the speaker’s name only once — at the end of climax of the introduction.

Lead the applause and remain standing until the speaker steps out in front — then be seated.
How Committees Work

WHY HAVE COMMITTEES?
1. Divides jobs of organization to be done.
2. Gives more people a chance to help.
3. Provides an orderly way to work.
4. Helps individuals to develop skills as leaders.
5. Makes good use of special abilities.

WHAT COMMITTEES DO:
1. Study the situation.
2. Decide what is to be done.
3. Suggest how to do it.
4. Present recommendations to the whole group.
5. Plan to carry out wishes of the group.
6. Keep group informed through reports.

HOW TO KEEP A COMMITTEE ACTIVE:
1. Chairman contacts members, arranges time and place for committee meetings (invites president to attend).
2. Let every member help in deciding on recommendations and programs to present.
3. Work with program committee on arranging suitable dates for programs.
4. Look after details for each program:
   a. Contact people for program in advance.
   b. Provide publicity for program in advance.
   c. Work with president to see that meeting place is comfortable.
   d. Present the program (Chairman introduces speakers).
5. Prepare information and assist secretary in presenting annual report.
6. Chairman reports regularly to the whole group.

This publication has been prepared to suggest practical steps for neighborhood improvement. Further assistance is available through your local extension agents' office.