

## A Technique For Building Community

Contributed by Robert Moskowitz  
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One person who had given up on getting a cohousing group started decided to work on her new neighborhood. She made bags of apples and attached an invitation to a pot luck at her house the following Sunday. She put the bags on the door handles of her neighbor's houses.

And was very discouraged that no one sent rsvps.

But on Sunday, everyone showed up.

So I think the take away is don't start a conversation on a theoretical level about how great cohousing is and why don't we do it here. Many people don't want theories in their homes. They will, however, respond to practical needs or meaningful neighborhood social events.

Sharon

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Sharon Villines in Washington DC

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But on Sunday, everyone showed up. After the meal and introductions,

she started a conversation about what she needed from neighbors and encouraged them to do the same. What she needed, for example, was someone who could watch one child while she suddenly had to go to a school to pick up a sick child basically someone she could call in an emergency. And they were off on developing more community.

One person I know said that in several years, her neighbor had never acknowledged her presence even though they had adjoining car ports. One day she asked him if he could help her in an emergency. Ever after he was very friendly and initiating conversations and offers of help.

So I think the take away is don't start a conversation on a theoretical level about how great cohousing is and why don't we do it here. Many people don't want theories in their homes. They will, however, respond to practical needs or meaningful neighborhood social events.

One need my neighbors in the larger community have mentioned is a tool library. They then discovered that a library in a nearby neighborhood had a tool library and another place rented tools, but if they hadn't, a local tool library in someone's garage would have been a possibility for interaction and sharing on a practical level.

Personally, I don't think social events alone develop community, that social events come after relationships are formed on a practical level. Even social clubs have a practical purpose -- a place to have dinner or host guests, a private golf course when there weren't any public courses, business contacts, etc.

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