

EXPECT SUCCESS



THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

"There are two gifts we should give our children: one is roots, and the other is wings."



One of the greatest assets of living in a small town is the ability to fully experience a sense of community. Last Sunday, the Girl Scout troop hosted Deerfield's first free Community Dinner, and it was a great success. Along with the Girl Scouts, there were numerous Boy Scouts and parents as well as Deerfield Community Center staff helping them make this event a reality. The goal of their project is to build a sustainable monthly get-together that will be hosted by organizations within our larger community. As I enjoyed a great meal, I was reminded of the intangible value that strong communities play in the lives of our children. While kids don't fully realize the importance of a healthy community culture, we, as parents and adults, have many opportunities to show them, talk with them and model for them how important this is. Helping our children develop a strong root structure is an important part of their future success. Here is a list of ways to build community; what other ways could you share with your child?

12 WAYS TO BUILD COMMUNITY

1. **Know your neighbors**-Do you know your next door neighbor, people on your block, down the street? The Search Institute suggests that kids should have at least three non-parent adults in their lives to talk with and go to if needed.
2. **Turn off your TV**-Community begins in the home. Set aside time to talk about your day, even if it's just 30 minutes. Spend time outside-playing catch, taking a walk, going for a bike ride. It's great family time and you meet others along the way.
3. **Greet people**-Teaching children the power of "Hello" is a life skill. Making eye contact and being present in the greeting for just a moment makes a big difference. (Remember to teach a proper handshake too-it will come in handy in later years.)
4. **Buy locally**-Supporting a local business helps a community grow and thrive. You would be amazed at the growing list of local businesses on Main Street, side streets and the Industrial Park. (And, we have an awesome Farmer's Market in the summer with fresh produce.)
5. **Share what you have**-Whether it's a cup of sugar or a yard rake, lending a helping hand to a neighbor models kindness and compassion. Children watch how their parents treat others in need.
6. **Help a lost dog**-Or cat, or bike, or jacket...the list goes on, but the sentiment is the same. Show your child that looking out for all things, great and small, has a value, and you hope it is what someone else would do for you.
7. **Garden together**-It doesn't have to be large. Sharing a few tomato plants can reap yummy rewards, and you can grow a friendship at the same time. Plus, kids love seeing the fruits of their labor.
8. **Fix it even if you didn't break it**-The old adage "leave it better than you found it" never goes out of style.
9. **Pick up litter**-It's a simple task that makes a big difference. (It also teaches kids not to litter.)
10. **Barter for your goods**-Bartering dates back to 6000 B.C., way before money was invented. You might have an awesome skill that others need. Kids can even do this through the offer of babysitting or yard work.
11. **Bake extra and share**-Giving to others always feels good. Send your child next door with a bag of cookies, and see them return with a big smile.
12. **Ask for help when you need it**-Living in a community means you don't have to do it alone. Just like it feels good to "give," we also must give ourselves permission to "receive." Children can learn a valuable lesson from knowing both.