

Family Development

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College of Education, The University of New Mexico



Photo courtesy of Los Amigos Summer Day Camp, Agua Fria Elementary School, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Community: *The Spirit of Support*



Snuggles the Bear

by Catalina Lovato

"By building relationships we create a source of love and personal pride and belonging that makes living in a chaotic world easier."

— Susan Liberman

As a classroom teacher I knew the importance of building relationships with my students and their families. I knew that in order for my students to be successful they had to feel safe, loved, and accepted. In order to accomplish this, my students had to know that I was sincere in my words and actions. Every year I set out to build a community within my classroom. Because a community is built around the shared interests, values, and goals of its members, I had to take the time to learn everything I could about my students and their families. I also had to be willing to share aspects of my life with them.

There are many ways to build relationships with children and build classroom community. One way that worked well for me was to introduce an unlikely character to my students: Snuggles the Bear. Introducing Snuggles as part of my curriculum brought together not only the children but also their families. Snuggles helped connect families in a way that encouraged literacy, self-esteem, and creativity. Snuggles went home every night with a new family along with his backpack filled with treasures, including his favorite book. It also contained a journal that the family would write or draw in to share his adventures and a camera to take pictures of Snuggles with the family. Along the way, Snuggles acquired numerous things that the families had given him when he went to visit such as hats, blankets, nightlights (he was scared at some homes), favorite books, t-shirts, etc. Snuggles would bring back a little bit from each home every time.

The children brought Snuggles back to school and the stories and photos were shared with the class the very next day. Each child was invited to share in his/her own words Snuggles' adventures and of course, the picture that the family drew together was also shared. During these early morn-

ing meetings, (which were also essential to building a community within our classroom) children were given the opportunity to share with their peers and their teacher. Some parents took it upon themselves to create a classroom book from their child's adventure with Snuggles. Parents were invited to come into the classroom to share their book and often the book was presented to our class as a gift for our classroom library. We all learned so much about each other from the stories that we shared through Snuggles the Bear.



Research points to the connection between social and emotional competence and academic success. Children who are aware of emotions in themselves and others, who work cooperatively with their peers, and who use adults and classmates as resources are more likely to succeed academically and lead fulfilling lives (Goleman, 1997). By taking the time to build a classroom community, teachers are able to foster social and academic growth while promoting self esteem, resiliency, and responsibility in their students. With a little guidance from caring adults, children can form relationships, work out problems, and learn about the world around them.

"When you talk about how the environment affects young children, what we're really talking about most importantly is the human environment; we're talking about relationships."

— Dr. Jack P. Shonkoff ♥

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Goleman, D. (1997). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

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Becoming the Village

by Dorothy Kerwin

Community can be defined in many ways. Whether we refer to community as a family, a neighborhood, a church, a town, a team, or a gang, community fulfills the human need to make connections with each other. The need to belong is in the center of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Recent brain research has confirmed the wisdom of caregivers throughout the ages that babies learn and grow through their interactions with others. The human brain is wired to learn by connecting synapses that are fired through human connections. Community is connection.

The children of the twenty-first century face a multitude of obstacles that can prevent them from reaching their full potential. Poverty, violence, inequities, pollution, global warming, and media overload are just a few of the barriers that the children of today must overcome. One of the most effective antidotes is to reach out and make a connection. The effort can be as small as a smile and a wave, or as large as becoming part of a statewide advocacy group devoted to improving policy for children and their families.

When my oldest son, Nicholas, graduated from high school a few years ago, I was filled with a sense of pride, joy, and overwhelming gratitude. My husband and I looked at each other in amazement that over 18 years had passed since we held our newborn son in our arms. We were so proud of the young man that he had become. We were also aware that we had not raised him alone and were mindful of all of the folks who helped us along the way.

There was the midwife and the La Leche League leader who taught us to trust our instincts. His preschool teachers understood our insecurities and shared their insights and knowledge. Friends created a babysitting co-op that allowed us to nurture our relationship as we nurtured Nick and his siblings. We appreciated the teachers who taught him to read and write and, most importantly, to think critically. There were coaches that taught him the skills of the game and skills to deal with his intense emotions. And there were neighbors who instilled a sense of trust and responsibility when they hired him to mow their lawns and watch their children. His church community gave him a safe place to discuss his emerging philosophy of life. The YMCA and our neighborhood youth group provided him with opportunities to develop his leadership skills. We feel so blessed that others took the time and energy to make a difference.

Although our son's journey was not without its bumps, he has reached adulthood with a positive sense of himself and resources to overcome adversities. These are the experiences that we desire for all children. In 1990, The Search Institute created Developmental Assets as a tool to discover what children need for healthy development. The 40 Assets are building blocks that fall into the following eight categories:



support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, time use, educational commitment, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. After surveying millions of youth throughout the United States, they discovered a direct correlation between children's perceived assets and their involvement in high risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, violence, teen pregnancy, truancy, and dropping out of school. The more internal and external assets in a child's life, the less likely it is that he will engage in risky behavior. Conversely, it's more likely he will experience success and fulfillment. These results proved true regardless of the child's gender, racial, or socioeconomic background. Although the studies were originally conducted with middle-school children, the developmental assets research has been extended to include elementary and preschool children with similar results. The message is that helping a child feel connected makes a difference.

The study concludes by sharing simple yet effective ways for individuals to help children feel that they possess the internal and external assets needed to thrive in the world today. Some suggestions include: learning the names of the children in your neighborhood, telling children to stop inappropriate behavior, sharing with parents when their children have done something positive as well as something improper, teaching your hobby to an interested child, complimenting young workers when they serve you well, spending time in your front yard, organizing intergenerational gatherings in your community, and creating family and classroom activities that celebrate these connections (2005).

In addition to taking personal actions that can help children feel connected, there is a call to consider how every policy decision affects children. In 2000, the Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development pub-

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Becoming the Village

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lished a comprehensive study on the science of early learning and its impact on society, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: the Science of Early Childhood Development*. Phillips and Shonkoff (2000), along with the committee created recommendations to guide policy and practice that impact young

children and came to the following conclusion:

The charge to society is to blend the skepticism of a scientist, the passion of an advocate, the pragmatism of a policy maker, the creativity of a practitioner, and devotion of a parent - and to use the existing knowledge to ensure both a decent quality of life for all of our children and a productive future for the nation (p. 15).

Everywhere we turn we have opportunities to connect with the children in our lives and in our communities. We can do this in the everyday moments of our lives as well as coming together with others to create changes in policies that impact children. If we all work together, we can begin to make a difference. When we put the needs of all of our children in the center of our thoughts and actions, the world becomes a richer place. ♥

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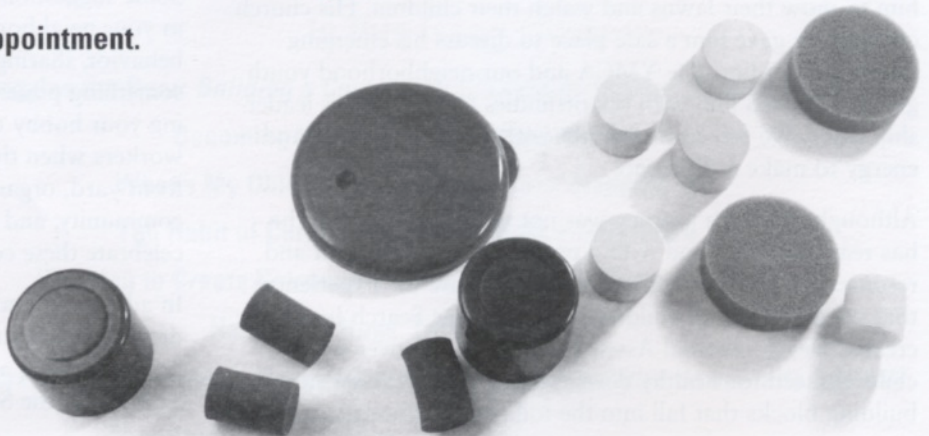
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What's My Obligation?

by Jan Winslow

When my kids were younger, we lived in a very small town about the size of Deming, New Mexico. It seemed everyone knew everyone. You couldn't go to the grocery store without running into at least someone you knew who would stop to visit with you. We knew which kids went with which families, even if we didn't know their names. And we looked out for those kids even though no one had asked us to. I remember a friend (not a really close friend) who called me on the phone once to let me know she'd seen my son, Jake, messing around doing some feisty activities with a friend of his. She thought I'd like to know. When I asked Jake about it he was shocked that I knew what he'd been up to. He wanted to know how I found out. I left him wondering. I wanted him to know that everyone was keeping an eye on him and that it was in his best interest that adults communicate about the well being of the kids. He may not have agreed it was in his best interest then, but that was okay with me.

I live in Albuquerque now, which is quite a big city by comparison. As much as I love it here and take advantage of what Albuquerque has to offer, I also recognize that Albuquerque is much more anonymous, which in some cases is not a positive. A kid can get away with certain things more easily. Jake, now older, still likes to push the limits with his creative orneriness, but I don't get phone calls about it anymore.

Many people today ask, "Why should I bother to get involved in other people's lives?"

I remember a time, after a rainy few days, when I was riding my bike home from work. As the path took me through a park right next to the arroyo, I noticed three kids – elementary age – trying to fish a cardboard box out of the water in the arroyo. One boy kept stepping further and further into the arroyo. I

stopped and stared at the kids. They looked up and kept on playing in the water in the arroyo. So I yelled at them, "Hey! Get out of the arroyo!" They looked at me and stepped back. I moved as to get back on my bike and one of the boys moved closer to the water. I stopped and walked closer and began explaining to them why it wasn't safe to play in the water. I was careful not to talk down to them, and tried my best to seem non-threatening, and they very quickly agreed to stay out of the arroyo. I got back on my bike just as another biker approached. He asked if everything was okay. I told him, as we rode off, what had happened. He told me he hopes someone like me takes a minute with his kids when she sees them doing something dangerous, and no one is around to stop them. That figurative pat on my back really made me smile!

Another time I was riding home on my bike up a steep hill with a friend of mine when we approached a group of three boys on the bike trail. One of them was throwing rocks at another and that boy was bent over to protect himself from the onslaught. As we slowly peddled our way up towards them, wondering what the heck was going on, I called out, "I can really feel the love, boys!" And the third boy immediately said, "Oh, they're brothers." And the kid throwing the rocks grabbed his brother and gave him a bear hug and smashed his face next to his own. "Don't we look alike? My brother said he couldn't feel pain, and it's my obligation as his brother to show him he really can." "Alright! I CAN," the other answered, and they burst out laughing. My friend and I kept on pedaling, shaking our heads and smiling. Boys! My friend acknowledged that she probably wouldn't have had the nerve to say anything to the boys but was glad I did and complimented me on how I approached them with humor. Everyone has a different approach and a different comfort threshold.

When approaching them we didn't know what was going on. But by bringing in humor and letting the boys know that they aren't the only ones on the trail, we were able to feel confident that everything was okay. They felt comfortable talking to us and we felt relieved to see that there was no problem. It reminded my friend of the time she was in the grocery store and a little girl, a preschooler, probably, was trying to get a bottle of corn syrup to take to her mom's cart. My friend assumed her mom was an aisle or two over as the girl was by herself but didn't look alarmed. The little girl grabbed the bottle and walked away confidently. But then she stumbled and the bottle dropped and broke. The girl was shocked. She stood there not knowing what to do. She looked around, horrified, her eyes brimming with tears. She just stood there, not making a sound. So, my friend looked up and down the aisle, and, seeing no one, went up to the girl and squatted down beside her. "It's okay. That happens to everyone and it's not a problem. Do you know what to do? All you have to do is tell one of

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What's my Obligation?

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the clerks 'Clean up on aisle 4,' and they'll come with a mop and clean it up. Are you here with your mom?" She nodded just as a clerk walked by without even noticing us. "Wait!" my friend called. "Excuse me!" As the clerk turned to us the little girl looked up and said in a timid little voice, "Clean up on aisle 4." The clerk looked at her and smiled and said, "I'll go get a mop, but just so you know, this is aisle 16!" They all three laughed and my

friend suggested she go get another bottle. With the little girl's permission, my friend walked her back toward her mom, who smiled and thanked her daughter for getting the corn syrup.

These snippets of time when we step into a child's life teach them that community members are there to support them at any time. It's also good for kids to know that their circle of community spreads farther than they realize.

For example, while driving down the road, four kids threw a rock at our car! Actually threw a rock at our car! No damage, but that's beside the point. My husband swiftly turned the car around to have a word with the boys. They looked about middle school aged. Surprisingly, two boys were still there when we pulled up at the park and confronted them. They both, of course, denied having anything to do with the rock throwing. I changed the subject and asked them what their names were. Surprisingly, they told me! I asked them which school they go to. They told me! As luck would have it, I know the principal there and was immediately able to ask them what that principal would say if she knew what disrespectful mischief they had gotten into. Both boys were shocked I knew their principal. Suddenly we weren't such complete strangers. Suddenly we had something in common and they realized they weren't anonymous kids able to get away with their wrongdoing. The next day I called the principal. She thanked me and told me she'd call the boys into her office and do some "handling."

What has become of those boys? I don't know. But I do know that I stepped in. Hopefully what happened taught them that we are all a part of a community and we all look out for each other. We are all a part of this circle of influence. Just as they are members of the Albuquerque community, they are members of a school community and their behavior reflects back

on their school, as well as Albuquerque and New Mexico. We can't know what our impact will be when we step in for the benefit of children, but we can make a decision to make an effort.

When Anne Stewart, Ph.D., of James Madison University, was bestowed the Virginia Counselors Association "Humanitarian and Caring Person" award, she stated during her acceptance speech, "I act because I believe every child is the promise of life, that we are called to tend to each child... (T)he welfare of each child is connected to the well-being of all children everywhere."

In the mid 1990s, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child worked on an international human rights treaty geared to the rights of children. To simplify one aspect of the treaty, it states that everyone concerned with children should work towards what is best for every child.

As New Mexico ECAN (Early Childhood Action Network) states, "The well being of every child is the heart of New Mexico." That's because every child matters and we, the adults who care about children, have a responsibility to every child. Every reader of this journal cares for children, either by working with them, for them, or raising them. So, does your sense of obligation end when you walk out the door of your profession or your home?

If you are nervous about involving yourself in a situation that makes you uncomfortable, think about these key points:

- ♥ Your silence implies your acceptance of the situation. Recognize that in many cases it's okay to speak up.
- ♥ Consider using humor. You can make a comment through a joke to test the waters.
- ♥ Ask a question instead of giving a command.
- ♥ If you don't feel safe, consider calling someone who can help.
- ♥ Think about how you would you feel if you were this person's family member.

Each person can consider how comfortable and safe she feels in different situations to determine whether or not she should step in. No two situations are alike. But, still, it's important to have a conversation with yourself to clarify whether you consider it your obligation to contribute to your community in this way. Decide whether you have it in you to find, and then act on, the best solution to a situation you see occurring. Determine whether you consider it your social responsibility or your moral obligation to step up. ♥

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Working to Create Community Connections

by Andrea Cameron

Throughout our lives, and depending on who we are, some of us may stay in one community for years and years, much like living all your life in the same small town or growing up in the house you were born in. Others of us might move from one community to another as we change jobs, churches, move across the country, or from one neighborhood to another. When we talk about distinct communities, we call them by name, such as “the medical community” or the “native community.” A group described in this way means that it consists of people who share something in common.

The field of early care and education is a community. In fact, it is a larger community that supports other community groups. For example, within the field there is a community of teachers. There is also the community of parents who love to hear about their child’s day, who don’t hesitate to voice their concerns regarding the care of their children, who sometimes drive too fast in the parking lot, and who love attending school parties and social functions.

Last night I attended my oldest daughter’s band performance. I sat in the bursting bleachers with many people I didn’t know, and some that I did. We smiled at our children. We smiled at each other and took pictures of each other’s children standing alongside our own. However, before leaving the house to attend, I was frantically running around trying to make dinner while searching for my youngest daughter’s only clean pair of socks. I was tempted to stay home with my youngest because she was tired and restless, but I knew we had to go. Once we got there, it was wonderful. I was not only proud of my daughter’s musical accomplishments, I was proud that our family attended. We made the effort along with a hundred other families and the feeling of community was powerful.

Being a member of a community takes work! This is especially true when a person is a member of many communities. Sometimes these communities overlap, especially for people who might attend the same church, have children who attend the same school or participate on the same sports team. When I was a little girl, I assumed that I would grow up and be part of the communities my parents were a part of. I thought that my future husband would belong to some fraternal organization and that I would know all my neighbors by name. I did not realize that although I still have a sense of community, it is different for me than what my mom experienced. For example, I do not carpool with other parents like my mom did when I was a kid, but I do know the parents of my daughter’s friends and I see them often throughout the week since our children attend the same before- and after-school program or swim team.

As a parent, I have also found that I am not always welcome with open arms into a community that surrounds my daughters. In fact, I remember feeling confused as to whether or not



I was welcome in my daughter’s classroom simply because no one pulled me aside and explained how things worked. Sure, there were the parent orientations, but whereas that gave me information, it did not connect me to anyone in particular. My gut reaction was that I was an outsider. I had to push those feelings aside and remind myself that the teacher was probably assuming that I knew the rules of this new community and that I would want her to focus more on my child and not cater to my needs. But in truth, I was needy and I did need a little hand-holding. I needed a little one-on-one so that I felt a sense of trust and understanding. When I was a preschool center director, I called these parents my HMP’s (High Maintenance Parents). Little did I know that I was an HMP. I realize now, that all an HMP needs, like most parents and family members, is for someone to make the effort, and for parents to make an effort in return.

Parents and families need to be considered, talked to, talked with, and welcomed. It just takes a little bit to welcome a parent, such as a smile and an introduction. When providing professional development trainings, I often ask teachers how they build relationships with parents. Many teachers are eager to share all their wonderful ideas.

However, more times than not, they can not tell me the names of the parents they work with nor can they remember a time where they introduced themselves one-on-one to a parent. In some of our trainings, we have teachers write out what they would say in their introductions of themselves and practice their script with other teachers. For example, my script usually sounds something like, “Hello Mr. Johnson, my name is Andrea Cameron and I ask that the children call me Ms. Andrea. You can call me either Andrea or Ms. Cameron, whatever you feel comfortable with. I’d like to tell you about our program, but feel free to stop me if you have any questions, or come see me if you have questions later.”

As a parent, I realized yesterday that I was calling one of the leaders at my daughters’ recreation program Nate ever since

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he started working there. His name is Shawn. I felt horrible and then I realized that I probably never called him Nate to his face. However, just in case, I plan to use his name the next time I see him just to make sure he knows that I know his name is not Nate! I know this is simple, but if I were him, I think it would make me feel good to know that a parent knows my name.

Communities can be created at the drop of a hat, but figuring out how we fit into those communities might take a little work. Sometimes it means giving time or resources to a community. Sometimes you are brought into a community because of your children or because you bought a new home or started a new job. In whatever way you have come to belong to a community, making the human connection to others is very important. I am learning that it is not enough for me as a parent to just attend my daughter's school functions. I need to connect with other community members in some way. I can say hello to other parents, thank the teacher, take pictures, and even slap a sticker on the back of my car to show my support. As a professional in the field, I need to cross over into many communities that support early childhood. I need to attend conferences and other professional development trainings, and I need to encourage others to attend these events as well.

I have also come to realize that I can be a bridge from one community to another. I can advocate for children at my family gatherings; I can encourage my book club to read a book that highlights early childhood; I can ask that people who attend neighborhood organization meetings keep children a priority; and I can contact my political representatives and let them know that education and supporting programs for children and families are important to me. That being said, I want to encourage all parents and teachers to think about the human connections they can make with each other. It takes time, patience, and above all, work. But in the end, the

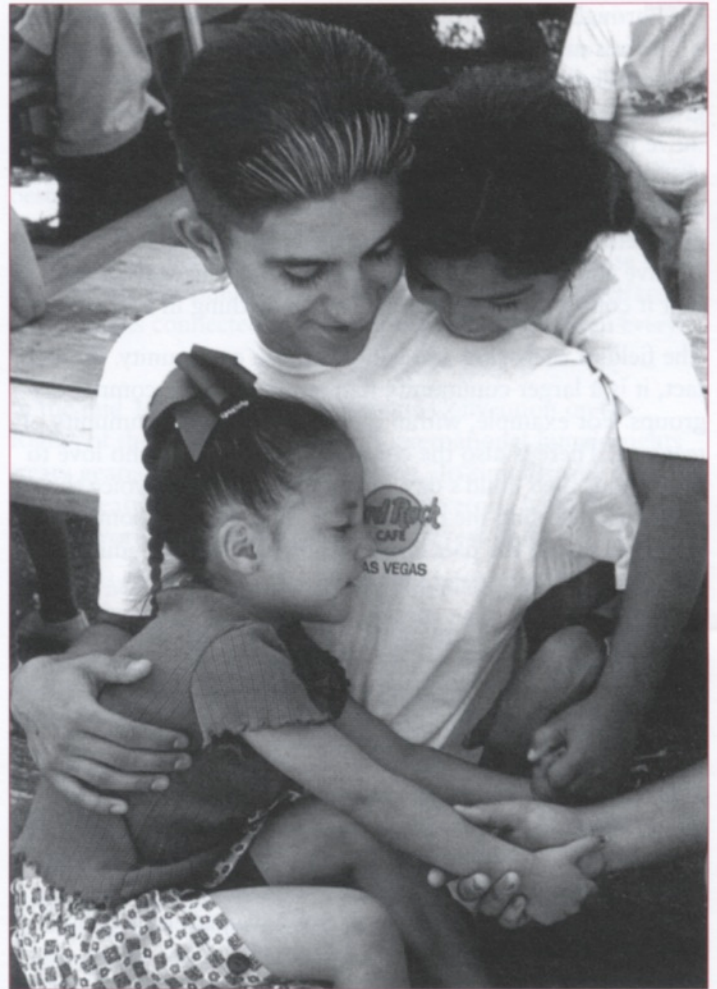


Photo courtesy of Los Amigos Summer Day Camp, Agua Fria Elementary School, Santa Fe, New Mexico

reward is a sense of connectedness and belonging that supports teachers, parents, and most important the children we all care about. ♥



The Habit of Caring

by Janet Stewart

"After all, a person's a person no matter how small."

-Horton the elephant as the voice of Dr. Seuss

While my pregnancy with my second child was not a difficult one, all the normal symptoms were expressed, including nighttime wakefulness and daytime tiredness. Just about the time my toddler sometimes slept through the night (but gave up any nap) I couldn't get through the night without my eyes springing open – or through the day without them drooping. One afternoon I sat down on the sofa near where my son was playing. He looked up at me and I smiled tiredly. Without a word he went to the end of the sofa and dragged a throw over to my lap. "Here's your blankie, Mama." Then he picked up a magazine from the coffee table and handed it to me, saying "Here's your mag'zine." He knew what I needed before I did myself!

From a young age children are capable of great acts of caring; when given models to follow they take for granted the naturalness of taking care of each other. One of our jobs as adults is to find ways of nurturing the *habit of caring* within a child's small community. When children have chances to act in caring ways, and when they are seen by others as capable of contributing, their chances for positive human growth are strengthened. Families and school communities can accomplish this in daily life. Some families pass unused toys to a younger sibling or cousin, or donate them to charity. Filling the cat's water dish or sharing freshly baked cookies with a neighbor are ways even very young children can make a positive difference in their world. Giving children the opportunity to care for others in their community teaches lessons about responsibility, the importance of fostering hope in others, and the power of individual and collective action. Children see that their actions have meaning, that each of us can make a difference, and that all of us together can make a bigger difference.

Building on what children know gives meaning to a service project. Most children of age three and up know how it feels to be hungry, sick or not warm enough, even for a brief time. They can imagine the sadness another child might feel if he or she had nothing to play with. They understand that babies need blankets and pajamas. They may be surprised to learn that in their own town some children do not have enough to eat. We can reassure them that other adults in the community are working to provide help, and that they in turn need our assistance.

Here are a few ways to help children make a difference:

♥ Read a newspaper article (revising as necessary) or tell a real or imagined story about a child who is hungry, sick or homeless and receives help. Ask the children to think of what the child might like or need. Guide them in making decisions about how to help. Remind them that no idea is laughed at, nor is any idea judged or ruled out until the end. Help them answer the question, "How can we really do this?"



♥ Start a community, individual, school or class garden, then donate produce or sell it to others and donate the money to a food bank. Even in the winter you can grow herbs in pots! Sometimes local community gardens can use help. One class project with preschool children included planting garlic bulbs at a community garden in late fall. Food banks need donations all year long and many now accept fresh produce, whether it's one zucchini or a pallet of watermelons from the local grocery. Gardening is a tremendously effective way to create and strengthen connections in your community.

♥ Make a card for a sick classmate or save change for a donation to a Child Life program in a hospital. Perhaps the children can take a field trip to a hospital playroom and ask the staff what toys or books the children need. (Check local conditions – sometimes hospital visits are not advisable for either hospital residents or young children.) Visits from health professionals for a question and answer session or Teddy bear clinic can be a great experience for the children. A doctor's office or hospital setting in the dramatic play area is a wonderful way for children to gain understanding of the sometimes confusing and frightening medical world. When any of us are ill, we appreciate a little extra TLC.

♥ Take advantage of new babies born to your families by having the parent periodically bring the baby in so that the whole class can observe him or her at group time. This gives children a personal connection with what little babies need. One year our preschool class decided to help homeless babies and children by making quilts, donating stuffed animals, and raising enough change to buy a small wooden rocking horse, which we painted. We also donated new and used clothing. During our project we took pictures to share.

So far these projects have focused on kids helping kids. Service learning can address other needs too, such as those of the elderly, animal welfare, and environmental causes. One approach is to look around your neighborhood. One preschool was within walking distance of a wild bird store. In the fall the children

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The Habit of Caring

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took a field trip there. This personal connection in their community inspired them to take action. They learned to use binoculars, examined feathers of different types, counted birds, and listened to and imitated bird calls. They fed birds all winter and learned to identify some local and migrating birds. When they had questions, they knew who to ask – the bird store lady.

Creating opportunities for children to make a difference teaches that giving is part of everyday life, not something that waits until they grow up or until that magical day when they are

“rich.” When a neighborhood park needed refurbishing, residents worked with the city to plan the new design. Children were active participants – they insisted on swings – which were included in the final creation.

No matter how little we have materially, each of us can make a difference, even if it's only because of the smile on our faces. The lessons we learn from each other about our shared lives on this earth are what make us rich. ♥

Resources to Support the Habit of Caring

Hunger: Hunger is a persistent problem all over the world. A report from the Roadrunner Food Bank (2005) estimated that 350,000 New Mexicans experience unhealthy levels of hunger every day – about one in six. Their Childhood Hunger Fact Sheet notes: “Childhood hunger is epidemic in New Mexico. One of three people served by Roadrunner Food Bank is a child, with more than 85,000 children receiving emergency food assistance each year.”

Cooperative Extension Service has lots of free information and might be able to provide on-site technical assistance if you'd like to start a garden. Check the website for New Mexico State University (NMSU.edu), click “Extension and Outreach,” then “Yard and Garden,” then “Horticulture,” under publications and scroll down to Circulars nos. 457: *Home Vegetable Gardening in New Mexico* and 457-B: *Growing Zones, Recommended Crop Varieties, and Planting and Harvesting Information for Home Vegetable Gardens in New Mexico*, free downloadable booklets on gardening in New Mexico. Many counties have Master Gardener Programs to advise and assist gardeners.

Master Gardeners: NM County Extension Offices <http://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/mastergardeners/programs.html>

Roadrunner Food Bank <http://www.rrfb.org/factsheets/Childhood%20Hunger%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Veggiegrowers.net of Albuquerque sells inexpensive mini-greenhouses that can be used to grow fresh vegetables year-round, and provides technical assistance. They work with families, schools and early childhood centers.

Homelessness: Homelessness is another sad situation in our communities. Albuquerque Public Schools saw rates of homelessness for their students double from spring 2008 to spring 2009. Nationally, there are only a handful of programs for homeless children. Cuidando Los Niños in Albuquerque is one of them. Statewide, public schools have Title I projects for homeless families and children 3 years old and up. The faith-based community is also a good resource to learn how you can help those in need in your town.

Cuidando Los Niños. Preschool and family support in Albuquerque. <http://www.cuidandolosninos.org>

Interfaith Hospitality Network of Albuquerque. A national program organizing faith-based congregations to provide shelter and more to homeless families. Currently the only New Mexico affiliate is in Albuquerque. <http://www.ihnabq.org/1.html>

The National Center for Homeless Education, SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. <http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/ibt.php>

The Rights of Homeless Children http://www.lcps.k12.nm.us/departments/FedPrograms/project_link/rights.pdf

General Resources

Lewis, B. (2009). *The Kid's guide to service projects: Over 500 service ideas for young people who want to make a difference.* (Self-Help for Kids Series): Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.

Search Institute. Grounded in extensive research in youth development, resiliency, and prevention, the Developmental Assets represent the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities young people need to avoid risks and thrive. <http://www.search-institute.org>

Slideshare. <http://www.slideshare.net/VolunteerSpot/family-friendly-volunteering-service-project-ideas-from-az>



Handmade Hugs

by Jan Winslow

Handmade Hugs (HMH), an outreach project developed within the Family Development Program, was conceived in the fall of 2007. HMH targets teen moms who have a tremendous need when faced with a pregnancy. The project provides a handmade blanket to them along with resources (a journal such as this one you are reading and a Baby Love Book) in a tote bag. The educational component and the human connection are both critical to the success of this program. When possible, the original gift is followed up with regular group get-togethers. The goal is for the new moms to create a long-lasting community.

Handmade Hugs creates community in several ways. There is the community of blanket-makers who contribute to these

new moms without even meeting them. The young moms are encouraged to meet regularly so a community of learners and strong friendships are naturally formed. An intended outcome of this project is to provide ongoing support that the moms are not currently receiving. As these young moms begin to feel successful they will be in a position to mentor others in the community they have created through this program.

In this journal we challenge you to discover a need in your community and then answer that need. It's satisfying to work with others to create community. Community building projects allow you to use your energy for positive change. ♥



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- ♥ How Witnessing Violence Affects Young Children – 1
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