



SCI Social Capital Inc.

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SCI Overview

Meet your neighbors. Volunteer to clean a park. Attend a PTA meeting. Join a bowling league. Listen to music at a local outdoor concert. Attend a local debate. Eat hot dogs at a neighborhood block party. Vote.

All these actions, large or small, weave a community fabric. The more often individuals engage with each other, the more strands there are in that fabric.

We are social animals, and we depend on this community fabric for our individual health, well-being, and prosperity. Recent research shows that we live longer, live happier, and live safer when we are part of a close-knit community. This is true wherever one lives — in small rural towns, suburbs, and even big cities. It's that fundamental belief — “I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper” — that makes our communities thrive.

What happens if the social fabric begins to fray? What happens if we watch TV instead of going to the community meeting, neglect to introduce ourselves to the people living across from us, go straight to work instead of stopping to vote at the nearby fire station for the primary? The cumulative effect of thousands of these actions leads to a neighborhood where people no longer look out for one another. No intervention in areas like education or housing, no matter how well-meaning, can succeed in an environment when people do not know or trust each other.

Since 2002, Social Capital Inc. (SCI) has been a national leader in exploring how communities can systematically, intentionally, weave stronger social fabrics connecting its members. SCI envisions a nation where individuals are strongly connected to their neighbors and play an active role in shaping the destiny of their communities. This increase in human connections, or ‘social capital’, will result in communities that are safer, healthier and more vital.

In six years of testing the SCI model in Woburn, Dorchester, and Lynn, we have developed programs that have engaged thousands of citizens in civic life and continue to make communities stronger. The following is a summary of SCI's award-winning approach:

1. Train a local facilitator to build relationships across community organizations and nurture a team of volunteer community leaders.
2. Provide a platform for youth to come together to address issues in their community. Train these young people in leadership skills. Give them a budget to allocate to local initiatives that make a difference and to implement their own solutions to community problems.
3. Use the Web to make it easier for individuals to find community activities and resources, share what they know about their area, connect with their neighbors, and mobilize others to get involved in issues, groups, and events.
4. Unleash volunteers to welcome people new to the area and recruit them to participate in the community. People participate because someone they know asks them to participate.
5. Run events that build bridges and spark a community spirit, such as neighborhood block parties, summer concert series, candidate debates, and multi-cultural festivals.

SCI is planning to replicate its programming in communities across the state. To get involved or learn more about how SCI can support your own community, contact David Crowley at dcrowley@socialcapitalinc.org.

“The SCI Dorchester Youth Council is a group of teens making a difference in Dorchester. We engage in the community in any way that we feel will be most effective. When an opportunity becomes available, we are there to lend a helping hand. When there is an issue we would like to address, but there are no opportunities available, we create our own. There is nothing a group of passionate teens cannot accomplish, and this council is just one example of just how successful we can be.” – From "SCI Dorchester Youth Council" by Terrill Johnson, Boston Teens in Print. Spring 2005.