Yellowfire Press

Meanwhile.....

Back at the Neighborhood @

by Ivan Scheier
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"We too often underestimate the power to achieve that we possess not only as individuals but as a neighborhood. Let me suggest your Good Neighbor Power rating is a great source of untapped power to create… to create the kind of neighborliness we all want… and to create the kind of city we can all be proud of."

- Tim Cochran, President, Independence (Mo.) Neighborhood Councils, in Neighbors Magazine.

*With thanks for neighborly suggestions from Ginny Bulger, Put Barber, Jane Bate, Kathy Dryovage, Ann Hamilton, Ray Judd, Mary Ann Lawson, Kathy Livingston, Gwen Meister, John Rexford, Dorothy Rozga, Ernie Shelley, and David Tobin. Final overall reviews were contributed by Jennifer Reynolds and Susan Dryovage. Manuscript preparation and editing were in the capable hands of Miriam Gingras, and the artwork and cover design were contributed by Henry Dryovage.

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This guidebook talks about how we can deliberately reinforce and increase the level of everyday decency where we live, learn, work, and worship; how we can recognize, release, and encourage more grass-roots friendly assistance between people; and how we can catalyze the kindly without contaminating it with control or over-formality.

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1 -- DEFINITIONS AND DEVIATIONS

Belonging
How many neighborhoods do you live in? One? None? Two? More?

If the question is puzzling, it's because "neighborhood" is one of those words everybody knows the meaning of, but practically nobody can define. I am no exception. In a real sense, this entire publication is an attempt to deepen and refine the understanding of what a neighborhood is and what it could be.

But we have to start somewhere:

A neighborhood is an area in which a feeling of belongingness and common interest exists among people.

The reasons for this feeling of belongingness may be any or all of the following:

a. There is a similarity in ethnic, racial, religious, socio-economic, age, or other background.

b. The area is organized as a unit for delivery of major services, in zoning regulations (e.g., all residential) and/or for other governmental or political purposes.

c. The area is set off by physical boundaries; for example, a residential district enclosed by major highway arteries, downtown high-rises, and a large park.

Coming Home Again

Why is it important to know what and where one's neighborhood is, and who is in it? The reason is that, more and more today, people are seeing the point of tackling social problems at the local and neighborhood level. To a large extent there is no alternative to such decentralization; the philanthropic capital, government or private, needed to finance massive intervention attempts from the outside has shrunk drastically. It is not expected to recover in the foreseeable future. Even were that not so, the pendulum has swung decisively against social experimentation or intervention directed from a distant centralized source such as Washington D.C., the state capital, or the headquarters of a private sector organization.

It is currently fashionable to denounce centralized proprietorship of social programs, forgetting the positive principles they often stood for. Generally, federal programs promoted the concept of including more people in decision-making. Somewhere in there, centralized sources nurtured decentralized alternatives, and these included the neighborhood movement. Ironically, it may have been such centrally directed programs which eventually helped us realize that local people understand their own problems and potentials better than any distant institution, with its national standardization and relative inefficiency. The recent surge in the neighborhood movement reflects the growing power of this perspective in dealing with social problems.

Several different Agendas

A key unit in the neighborhood movement is the neighborhood association. These associations tend to be advocacy- or issue-oriented on matters affecting their neighborhood such as public transportation, housing codes, crime prevention, rent control, energy conservation, trash removal, etc. Where adequate services are not being offered, the approach is more likely to be persuading local government to provide them, rather than doing so within the community, neighbor-to-neighbor. Generally, today's neighborhood association still seems to view its role largely as levering out of local or other power sources what it sees as a fair share of resources and services. This is distinct from seeing how much genuine self-reliance is possible in providing these services on a do-it-yourself basis within the neighborhood.

This people-to-people self-reliance in providing services is an emphasis of this guidebook. I believe this do-it-yourself approach to services supplements rather than supplants typical roles and responsibilities of neighborhood associations today; in any case, there is significant precedent for this approach today in neighborhoods. Thus the Council of Neighborhood Associations in Grand Rapids, Michigan has developed a low cost-no cost energy conservation project, a skill exchange program, and day-care cooperatives, all of which depend on intensive people participation from within neighborhoods. This guidebook simply wants to encourage much more of the same, and in greater variety.

Another distinct orientation of this publication is a view of services not just in terms of more formal "professional" help provided to lay people from the outside, by mental health centers, schools, social services, etc. Here, the notion of "services" is broadened to include the ground level of everyday decency. Here, services are understood as how well or poorly people treat each other every minute of the day. Take a deep breath, think of "good deeds", and don't stop reading.

This leads us into a realm broader than that of the neighborhood association - or at least different. So does a new definition of neighborhood, discussed later in this guidebook.

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2 PRECEDENT FOR THE PROPOSAL: WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

Some Risk Taking

The plan to be presented is composed of a number of distinct tactics or strategies. Virtually every one of these tactics has been tried out in real life with at least modestly encouraging results. But I have never been able to acquire reports

or other evidence of the entire package – or even most of it – being applied. To the extent this whole may be greater than the sum of its parts – or lesser, or simply different – this guidebook is frankly a format in search of validation. On the other hand, nothing prevents concentration on those individual strategies which have been tested to some significant degree.

Now let us develop the case for what will be called neighborhood enabling. The purpose should not be lost sight of in all this development: to get more people more involved helping and supporting one another for the common good.

The Council believes that the future of Grand Rapids depends on healthy, vibrant neighborhoods. And the future of Grand Rapids' neighborhoods depends on people. People making the fundamental decision that the house they live in, the street it sits on, the people living next door and down the block are important for their present happiness and for their future. But their future also depends on their actions. Healthy, vibrant neighborhoods have people aware of the threats to their neighborhoods, who are compelled to identify those threats, and who will organize their neighbors to stem them.

(Statement by The Council of Neighborhood Associations, Grand Rapids, Michigan)

A Common Ground of Caring

In the quest for community and the search for alternatives to alienation, we sometimes neglect the heartening part of daily life. Consider the acts of everyday kindness seen, done, or benefited from daily: doors held open; hitchhikers picked up; smiles bestowed; directions given on a busy street; pigeons fed in the park; good service given beyond the strict call of duty and shown appreciation for by customers above and beyond the duty of tipping; good natured humor making a day easier. In one southern city, a retired gentleman regularly waits outside the door of a supermarket to help people carrying packages. (He does seem to favor attractive widows.) I've observed scores of such natural decent doings, in airports and other life settings.* I'm sure you have too.

All this is informal grass-roots volunteering outside an agency or organizational setting. Though the word "volunteer" is rarely used to describe what happens, this is voluntary help-intending work not obviously or directly done for money, or for any closely calculated expectation of equal or greater "favors" in return. Probably the vast majority of kindness occurs in this "daily" way, apparently spontaneously. We are likely thinking of a consistently high level of such friendly assistance when we say we live in a good neighborhood or work in a nice office. It might even occur to us that this kind of natural and sincere helping is a large part of what we mean by quality of life.

*Exploring Volunteering Space: The Recruiting of a Nation, by Ivan Scheier, Volunteer Readership, Boulder, Colorado, 1980. Chapter 12.

We expect our clergy to support from the pulpit this ambience of everyday helping and maybe we should also begin expecting clergy and congregation to implement more of it on the other side of the stained-glass windows. Perhaps this guidebook will encourage more application of Judeo-Christian teachings in everyday life.*

In any case, we ordinarily appreciate the people who contribute to quality of life in this way, if we happen to think about it at all, and if they're not too bleeding-heart pious about it. We may even occasionally feel some obligation to pitch in ourselves and "do our part".

But generally, we do not believe we can decisively intervene to improve or enrich this level of informal volunteering. We're more likely to move out of a "bad neighborhood" than try personally to change it; we'll stop patronizing a cold unfriendly place of business before we put pressure on the proprietor to improve the situation. In sum, we usually accept the level of informal helping interaction as a given in a human-occupied space, gratefully when it's good, sadly or irritably when it's bad.

*Beautifully concentrated on this challenge is David Lewis' The Neighboring Notebook: Ten Exercises for Working With Volunteers. 125 pages, 1979, $15.00. IDEA, East Aurora, N.Y.

Cultivating the Common Ground

I believe we can deliberately increase the level of everyday decency where we live, learn, work, and worship. We can recognize, release, and encourage more grass-roots friendly assistance. We can catalyze the kindly without contaminating it with control or formality. In fact, I do not see how we can afford not to try. If – as I believe – caring is the core of healing in a society, we cannot abide cold indifference, or look on neighborly concern as a miracle beyond out control. The people who would facilitate these gentle interventions – more like catalyzing or releasing help than directing it – will be called neighborhood enablers. This is simply a convenient shorthand for the functions we'll be describing in more detail as this guidebook proceeds. In other words, the definition of neighborhood enabling will accumulate in these pages, hopefully becoming clearer even as it becomes larger.

Other names would do as well as neighborhood enabler: neighborer, help connector, friendly facilitator, or whatever name makes sense to you once you've read this guidebook.

Under whatever name, the idea of actually facilitating daily decencies may seem remote from the warmth of "spontaneous" helping. If so, I can only suggest that the neighborhood enabler should function from a sound basis in

ethical conviction, much as fundraisers for charitable causes can be most effective when they truly care about the cause. As for technique, I believe neighborhood enabling will draw upon skills and sensitivities similar to those of today's Director-Coordinator of Volunteers. The main difference is that this mainly informal kind of volunteering is not usually in an agency or program setting and has large elements of self-help mixed with help of others. But a crucial common denominator remains: how to motivate people to help one another without using money.

Earlier we gave some examples of (apparently) naturally occurring help. Let's move one step further, now, to examples of grass roots volunteering which are clearly stimulated or enabled. My first experience occurred during the 1979 Christmas season – appropriately enough, because what we're really talking about is encouragement of the Christmas or Hanukah spirit all year round. [Might a church call their enabler a "Christmaser"?]

Every year my parents sent me a care package of fresh Florida fruit. In 1979, the pink package-pick-up slip arrived just ten days before Christmas. I decided to brave the post office line rather than risk unfresh fruit on December 26. While I was still an estimated forty minutes away from the window, an alert clerk, though very busy, noticed the pink pick-up slip in my hand, and shouted over the din to this effect: "Sir, there's a special window for package delivery around the corner. The line is probably shorter there." I hesitated. Having already invested twenty minutes in this line, I was paranoid about giving up my place for another possibly longer line I couldn't see. Enter the scene, a young man carrying packages, right behind me in line. This young man offered to check the parcel pick-up line, if I'd hold his place in this line. I agreed, thanked him, and as he left, noticed him transferring packages to a young lady he was with. She virtually disappeared under the additional load since she was already carrying parcels. Naturally, I then offered to hold some of the packages for her until her young man returned; so did the man in front of us in line. She thanked us and agreed. Her young man returned with a favorable report on the package pick-up line. I wished the couple a Merry Christmas, shouted thanks to the clerk, picked up my fresh fruit in two minutes flat, and left glowing. I shouldn't have done that. I should have returned to the long line bearing oranges, to complete the other-plus-self-helping scenario.

Or are such sequences ever really complete? With appropriate encouragement they might go on forever. In this instance, my parents' kindness, combined with their holiday wish, set the scene. The clerk's extra concern and effort triggered the helping sequence; it gave the young man behind me in line an opportunity for a helping initiative which also triggered some helping from the man ahead in line and from me. If we begin with the clerk's friendly facilitation (consistent with efficiency, too, and that's fine) we see that a relatively small "levering" effort can release much larger quantities of helping energy.

The scenario can move in more than one dimension. A reviewer points out that my telling this story may "create ripples in another pond".

A second example: mealtime on an airplane, and hungry. The cabin attendant advises to my surprise that I have one of the 54 varieties of tickets which don't get me fed. Can I buy a meal then? No, sorry. I could buy a drink, but the associated peanuts hardly seemed worth it. Just as I had resigned myself to a fast, the man across the aisle who'd overheard the exchange said he qualified for a meal, didn't want it, and would give it to me. I resisted feebly, but soon accepted gratefully. Later on the flight, I tried to buy him a drink. He declined with a "Thanks, no. JUST PASS IT ALONG." Beautiful. I tried to pass it along the rest of the day; to begin with I scarcely trampled anyone on exodus from the plane.

Here the situation, including the man being within overhearing distance, triggered the happy sequence. In both examples, note that the helping interactions are informal, and usually, not always, tend to be win-win in nature, mixing other-help with self-help, a healthy mixture, in my view. In all cases, we're talking about quality of life events in natural settings, and the examples indicate these events can be facilitated, triggered. So why don't we deliberately try to pass it along? The possible kinds of personal payoffs have been indicated previously here; benefits at the organizational, neighborhood, and community level will be traced more clearly from now on, and summarized in Chapter Seven.

Some Precedents for the Neighborhood Enabler Role

Neighborhood enablers will encourage informal voluntary helping by catalyzing not controlling it. They identify, link, reinforce, mediate, facilitate, in all the ways we will describe. The distinction between facilitating and directing will be emphasized throughout; so will the crucial difference between releasing vs. doing good.

The role is plural. It takes many people to fill the role. That is, while there would often be one overall coordinating enabler, (probably paid because working long hours continuously) s/he would likely have only token impact without massive assistance from associated volunteer enablers. The program will attempt to reach all people, not just a client elite.

Let's move a step further towards specificity by looking at some analogous roles, to get the feel of neighborhood enabling and establish some precedent for its practical potential. Something like the neighborhood enabler in function are:

- The good host or hostess at a party skillfully encouraging friendly interactions between people
- The social chairperson of a club or event
- The social director at a resort

- Matchmakers, who try to trigger mutually satisfying relationships between people (Dating Bureaus do it for money)
- The street worker, youth worker, neighborhood worker, who cannot really help individuals without also facilitating supportive relations between individuals
- The social worker in a "patch" or neighborhood
- The Pastor's wife in New England history, and in some cases, the Pastor's wife's husband
- Circus clowns, court jesters, and their everyday counterparts
- The organizer of carpools, babysitting pools, and other networks
- The organizer of mutual interest or common concern groups
- An effective parent.

The above roles resemble the neighborhood enabler in the attempt to facilitate helpful interactions between people. The differences are that these roles tend to emphasize special problems or functions (dating, carpooling) on special occasions, for special people (troubled youth, church members). Ordinarily, the neighborhood enabler role is more generically targeted, and continuous.

Several other roles deserve somewhat more detailed attention, either as contrast to the neighborhood enabler role, precedent for it, or elements of both.

1. Graduating at the top of the class in charm school or the college of how-to-sell-yourself doesn't make you an enabler. Though your skills may aid you in impressing other people more, you'll know more about getting ahead yourself, than helping other people get along with each other.
2. In the political sphere, the precinct or ward worker might be cousin to the enabler. In his or her more modern clothing as "the mayor's neighborhood representative", the likeness seems closer. The difference, roughly speaking, is that the precinct worker tends to connect people "upward" for the kinds of resources commanded by city hall, e.g., getting a city job or more frequent police patrols. The enabler would be more concerned with connecting people "horizontally", as peers, for more informal helping interactions. Moreover, the enabler's assistance would be more disinterested. The expected return would more likely be the occurrence of the help itself, rather than affiliation with a party, votes, or money. Indeed, the people who give and receive help might often be unaware of the enabler's good offices.
3. Like the enabler, a community or neighborhood organizer works at ground level, trying to get people to do things which help one another. The differences, at least in emphasis, appear to be community organizers' greater concentration on special people, the exploited or unadvantaged; the phrasing of helping strategy in terms of collective action rather than individuals; and a focus on matters which are often adversarial or controversial. The enabler role would be more open-ended in capitalizing on opportunities for good-doing, wherever and whenever they may occur, including the "spontaneous". Moreover, I see the enabler as working primarily within a generally accepted range of non-controversial goodness, more oriented to services than to advocacy.

   This assertion has produced a great deal of "hot" commentary to this effect: how can you really expect to help people if you avoid battle on issues that make a difference to them and are therefore emotional, upsetting. On the other hand, some of these same commentators recognized the danger of assuming that only anger can build motivation and teamwork to accomplish citizens' goals. The confessed themselves tired of the politics of anger.* Two reviewers, both neighborhood organizers, even suggested how neighborhood enabling could complement the usual work of neighborhood associations, as a warm-up, ice-breaker, pump primer, for team-building and to bring more members to the association by adding friendliness and mutual helpfulness as an attraction.

4. A community or neighborhood center might come quite close to the neighborhood enabler role envisaged here, especially when such centers use their good offices to help form common interest and common groups among the people served, facilitate networking in a neighborhood, and the like. But, as we shall see, the neighborhood enabler also works with informal non-programmed slices of life, daily, in the streets, for all people in an area. This would be a somewhat unusual level of outreach for any community center I know of – though I'd love to stand corrected on that one.

*Actually the phrase was a bit more colorful than this, but you get the idea.

Goals of community centers, neighborhood associations, and even service clubs have commonalities in their purpose and mission, i.e.: to improve "quality of life". The populations served may be quite diverse in size, needs, and demographics, but the commonalities enable collaborative efforts in meeting needs.

(Comment by a neighborhood worker on earlier draft of neighborhood enabler paper)

Chapter Six deals with issues in defining the scope of an enabler's responsibility. For now, let's assume this will be a neighborhood, or some other group that belongs together in some sense; for example, a school, a church or synagogue, an apartment building, a hospital ward.

The next chapters describe three major kinds of strategies a neighborhood enabler can employ.

Chapter Three: Connecting People.
Chapter Four: Catalyzing Positive Relations Between People
Chapter Five: Recognizing and Endorsing Informal Helping

Connections, the theme in this chapter, include the formation of common interest and/or common concern groups, the facilitating of networks and the identification of linkages "upward" to resources available from specialized helping organizations.

Group Information
The overall concept/belief is that many people in a territory will have something naturally to give to others, for mutual assistance, support, and enrichment. They simply don't know about one another, or it they vaguely know about one another, they may need some facilitation to establish the linkage.

The enabler team will have the people knowledge needed to identify such mutually beneficial connections.* The enabler remains low profile as s/he builds the linkage mechanism, tells people about it, and pulls out of the operation as soon as possible. I've seen it over and over again; just get people together who share a common concern, and they will usually find ways to help one another on the problem. Attempting to program them is suspect of serving our ego needs rather than their needs.

*In many other cases, the common interest and concern will be vital and visible enough so that people will identify themselves.

Quite straightforward methods exist for facilitating such group formation. For example, ask people in your territory to complete a statement like this:

I would like to be in touch with someone else who is also concerned about or interested in _____ _____ Put an asterisk next to topic areas you'd be interested enough in to do a little coordinating work.

You might get concerns/interests such as:

community gardening
improved road repair
solar power
declining property values
day-care centers
food-buying co-ops
crime prevention and control

The interests and concerns identified in the above form almost always find ample company in my experience using this simple search procedure over the past year.

You can go house to house with this, similar to what was done in Project Link-Up in Mordialloc, Australia some years ago.* Or you can have interest/concern ballot boxes at easily accessible locations in the territory. Then the enabler team can sort out common interest groups and put the people in touch with one another.

*Ivan Scheier. People Approach: Nine New Strategies for Citizen Volunteer Involvement. Volunteer Readership, Boulder, Colorado, 1977.

Where you can—with people together in a meeting—it's more exciting and democratic to let people sort themselves out. You can do this by having people put posters on the wall with their interest/concern areas, and plenty of room on the posters for other people to sign up. Or you can simply let people wander about the room with their concerns on slips of paper attached to their clothes, forehead, etc., and then mix and match.

These face-to-face approaches have been successfully tried, but don't underestimate the time they take: at least 30-45 minutes.*

Group formation—getting people together who in their shared concern can genuinely help one another—can be divided into common interest and common problem connections, as in sections A and B following. The distinction between the two is sometimes quite subtle and a matter of degree.

*For more on these approaches see The Bridge by Ivan Scheier and Susan Dryovage, Yellowfire Press, 1981.

A. Forming Common Interest Groups
The enabler identifies a set of people who are not in communication with one another, but share an interest in, say, stamp collecting, historical preservation, hiking, environment, bicycling, etc. The enabler then puts the interest-sharers in touch with one another, and might even go as far as setting up a first meeting.

B. Forming Common Problem Groups
The process parallels formation of common interest groups and might lead to finding or founding groups such as Parents Without Partners, a Seniors Club, all kinds of companionship groups for the lonely, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc. The group may or may not choose to be a chapter of a national organization. It may also be relatively informal and temporary; for example, parents concerned about an unsafe crossing for their children.

There are issues and pitfalls in forming both common interest and common problem groups. (The two kinds of groups can obviously overlap.) First, the enabler who expects to retain credibility and cooperation in the territory must stay within the scope of community tolerance. In most cases, this excludes a single swingers' club, say, or a political cell advocating the violent overthrow of the government. Some neighborhoods will be very uptight about formation of virtually any issue-oriented or social action group, where strong feelings on both sides of an issue exist; for example, either pro- or anti-ERA, abortion, gun control, nuclear energy, etc. The enabler's involvement merely in facilitating either side of such issues will tag her/him as partisan and as representing less than all of the neighborhood. Loss of trust and loss of information sources are two likely penalties for the enabler.

How to be both relevant and uncontroversial will be an extraordinarily difficult decision for enablers in many cases, and there must be the clearest possible guidelines formulated on this issue from the beginning. Again, my inclination is for the enabler to concentrate on the release of service, and refer the rest to community organizer type people – at least at first. Later, as trust builds, the enabler role in responsible social action may come to be more widely accepted. But pure and clean distinctions will often be impossible at any stage, since many worthwhile groups are inextricable mixtures of service and advocacy. Even supposedly uncontroversial interests such as bicycling can quickly get you into hot issues; for example, bicycle paths and the rights of bicycle riders vs. the convenience of the motorist.

For the politically polarized at least, one way out may be to have both more liberal and conservative enablers working more or less independently in a territory, so that the liberal enabler, for example, would naturally be expected to facilitate liberal positions on nuclear power, abortion, ERA, etc.; ditto on the conservative side for the conservative enabler.

For whatever topic area groups are being formed, the enabler must avoid investing too much time and effort doing for groups; for example, writing proposals or becoming anything like their executive, office manager, or even their agent. The enabler should only facilitate connections which provide the opportunity to form and continue a group. What people do with that opportunity should be left mainly to them. The enabler must be free to build connections for other common interests and concerns.

Networks
A network is an ongoing sharing connection between people or organizations for exchange of ideas, information, expertise, personal support, or materials. For the membership in any network, the assumptions are that:

1. Everyone, no matter how inexperienced or helpless, has something to give;
2. Everyone, no matter how experienced or skilled, needs something, and
3. In the matches possible between offerings and needs, a great deal of relevant, high-quality, yet inexpensive help can be exchanged, of the type we might otherwise have to purchase or solicit from outside sources.

Common interest or common problem groups will frequently – but not always – network within their group as a way of achieving their goals. Networks are often – but not always – composed of people who share a common interest or problem. But networking can occur over shorter time-spans than the maturing of a common interest or problem group. Networks may also require more individual initiative and skill in developing and maintaining linkages.

Networks can be deliberately built and maintained; a recent guidebook describes a variety of methods for doing so.* The role of the enabler is to identify people in the territory who have something to give to one another in relation to their real needs, then facilitate formation of the appropriate network, say, babysitting pools, crime-watch procedures, widows' phone support systems, helping hands (mothers in a neighborhood available at safe-point homes for kids who are scared, need to go to the bathroom, etc.).

*The Bridge: A Guide for Networkers, by Ivan Scheier and Susan Dryovage, Yellowfire Press, 1981.

The enabler can also build more trust and efficiency into existing help-exchange systems; for example, I.D. cards and safe pick-up locations for hitchhikers and people who pick them up.

Finally, the enabler need not be restricted to the exchange of work. The exchange of things which perform work might also be an area explored for facilitation; for example, sharing or exchange of home repair tools in a block or cluster of homes. But there are some cautions in material-exchange networks; for example, what happens when an implement-on-exchange is damaged or not returned on time? Rules for dealing with such situations must be clearly established from the beginning.

The previously described networks tend to be specialized for dealing with certain types of problems such a transportation (carpool) and loneliness (widows' phone support system). There are more open-ended systems in which one doesn't really know beforehand exactly what people are willing to give to one another and what needs will be identified.

A basic element in such systems is the "glad give". A "glad give" is some fairly specific activity a person

1. likes to do, enjoys;
2. does pretty well,
3. which might be of use to someone else.

Examples of a person's "glad gives" might be swimming, vegetable gardening, cooking, sharing weatherization information, etc.

In the past eight years, I've observed about 5,000 people participating in glad give exchange processes. The conclusion: about 80-90% of the things people enjoy doing and do pretty well prove to be useful in filling other people's needs.

The enabler team would first inventory glad gives in their territory, then "market" and match them by setting up face-to-face round-table meetings, classified columns in newsletters, bulletin boards, sharing trees, and helping trade centers* at appropriate places in the territory: apartment buildings, shopping centers, neighborhood centers, public buildings, on malls, etc.

These exchange points might differ somewhat from the usual bulletin boards, etc. First they should deal with services, materials and facilities people can offer each other free or on a win-win trade basis, rather than paid services and products for sale. Second, they should have some notice attached to the effect that any transactions are the risk and responsibility of the persons involved and cannot reliably be monitored or policed to prevent rip-offs. This risk would be reduced somewhat if volunteers were available to evaluate potential linkages and conduct sample checks on the effectiveness of existing matches between "glad gives" and needs.

*On the model of Resource One in San Francisco, a helping trade center would be a booth, preferably with volunteers in attendance, where people could come and register their glad gives and needs, and get some help in finding appropriate matches for either gives or needs.

This strikes some reviewers as a rather dreadful form of policing. Still, a network system should ordinarily have some protections against exploitation, the imbalance which can occur when too much is taken from a person relative to what that person gets. While presumably you can't be exploited if you're only offering what you're glad to give, some protections are nevertheless desirable to assure that people take just so many times before they give, or vice versa. But such rules would quickly get us into record-keeping, and maybe some associated bureaucracy, too. Nor should remedies against exploitation throw us to an equally distasteful other extreme of super-careful calculation to ensure getting precisely as much as we gave (or more). Such is not volunteering.

Maybe the best procedure is to make people aware of potential dangers, perhaps offer workshops for those wishing to perfect their networking sophistication and skills, and then let grown-up people take their own risks.

Another way of dealing with the possibility of exploitation is to canvas people in a territory on both their needs and their "glad gives", analyze the whole pattern, and make people or groups aware of positive linkages. Instances of this have been described elsewhere as in Project Link-Up in Mordialloc, Australia,* the Christmas Project in Kalamazoo, Michigan,* and certain elements in Involvement Day.** All of these have one basic element in common: both needs and gladly shareable resources are inventoried for individuals and organizations in a territory, door to door, via newspaper advertisements, etc. The enabler team then studies the overall pattern and usually finds that appropriate connections between individuals and organizations will assure that at least some of the needs of virtually every individual or organization can be met by matching with the "glad gives" of another individual or organization. In this system, satisfaction is only achieved via rather complex linkages in which ! gives to B and receives from C, etc.

ST. ANN'S CHURCH
Lexington & Cedar
(in Fairmont)

Are conducting a door-to-door survey of neighborhood needs during the month of October.

YOUR COOPERATION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.

St. Ann's Church

(Notice in Neighbors Magazine)

*"People Approach" publication, 1977.
**Exploring Volunteer Space, 1980, Chapter 18.

The Upward Connection

The enabler mainly tries to make it easier for people to help one another as peers or equals. But when that doesn't produce needed help, the enabler may assist in connecting people "upward" to resources and assistance available only from the helping establishment in human service delivery agencies, at City Hall, etc.

Unlike the precinct worker or the Mayor's neighborhood representative in our previous example, the enabler won't expect votes or party loyalty in return for such favors nor will s/he necessarily have much clout or influence to pry the needed resources loose.

What s/he will have is information or ready access to it. The complexity of modern society is such that relevant resources often exist but can't be located by the people who need them. Therefore, accurate up-to-date information on available resources is a crucial dimension in effective upward connections. Local Information and Referral Services often associated with Volunteer Centers have been enabling in this dimension for many years in communities across North America. I can visualize enablers roaming their territories with walkie-talkies, linking people directly to Information and Referral Services, Citizen Advice Bureaus, and the like.

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