

The Building Blocks of Community

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Faster. More efficient. No time. These are the trademarks of a successful person in our society. But is there time to pause, reflect, and think? We need to slow down and consider for a minute: what shapes us to be the people we are today? Is it the boundless realm of technology or the real, live, face-to-face, heart-to-heart conversations we share with people in our community? Perhaps both contribute to shaping our character and personal ideals, but talking over a phone shouldn't replace looking someone straight in the eye. Step back from the world of distractions and reflect on the community which has made you who you are today. How can we give back, improve, and make an impact on our community?

A community can be local, digital, or even global, but an effective community is cohesive. In the words of Thomas Friedman, "The country looks so much better from the bottom up" (Friedman "Where"). Much like a pyramid, our country and communities need an extensive foundation. Strong communities are built upon the unshakable foundation of hard workers and held together by the mortar of leadership. Communities need cohesive bonds so everyone is able to work together. Every person has a place and upholds the community. In a pyramid, every stone is laboriously placed and each is essential to the stability of the pyramid. Finally, the outer layer is put in place to make the pyramid look appealing, inviting, and polished. We polish our communities with feelings of inclusion and collaboration. A good community will look great from any angle, but all communities look best from the base up.

All members of a community can strive to support and become part of the foundation. A successful community is sustained by values such as trust, perseverance, and integrity. Take pride in your values. By caring and going the extra step, you could make someone's day or even

week better. I am continually inspired by the values our cross country running community displays. After every race, rain or shine, we gather together to cheer on the last runners. Supporting all runners regardless of their team is important; we're shaping the next generation of runners to embody the core values of a community. Each stone of a community needs to be crafted and shaped to reflect the values important to that community. Every person who enters a community is a new stone ready to be crafted or an old stone waiting to be polished and added to the foundation. An inclusive community will support, work with, and look out for one another. All youth and young adults in a community deserve a caring mentor in their lives. Once a community reaches its polished state, there is only one option left: to expand.

A connected global community working together is now possible. We need to expand our "pyramid" globally. The interconnected base is growing, and each of us can be part of the base while contributing to the expansion of our knowledge. Previously, a vision such as this wasn't possible. Today our world is interconnected on a scale that allows for a global community—a community where the power of many individuals is combined in epic proportions and everyone is included. One of our biggest problems as a country is isolationism. With a base encompassing everyone, the impact we as humans could have for the better of the planet and ourselves is unimaginable. Anyone of us can make a difference. However, by working together as one, we can interlock to form the base a successful community needs. The "power of one" is huge, but the power of our global community joining forces is unstoppable. In this day and age, each and every one of us has the power of destruction and the power to uplift a community. Collectively we can make the right choice.

We need to think of future generations and what effect our actions will have on their world and community. Make sure your impact is beneficial to those around you. As Thomas

Friedman asserts in his book *Thank You for Being Late*, “I am built to think about my grandchildren. I am not a cheetah” (6). We may not be able to keep up with the speed of technology, but we are wired to think about our children. Building a healthy community and world for future generations is essential. The building blocks are here; we need to put them in place.

Works Cited

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