Food Brings Us All Together

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Abstract

When you move to a new neighborhood, it’s hard to get comfortable at first. You may have concerns or questions about how some things are accomplished and even more so if you are a part of an HOA. For this capstone project, I wanted to create a space for the people of my housing community to come together and network. This was going to be a place where they could talk and get to know each other as well as have a discussion session on items they may have questions about. In a society that’s new, you have to adapt and overcome obstacles whether that be personal or mental ones or actual physical obstacles. This space and project was done to allow relaxation and understanding through a potluck with a sense of food and community.
Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project

I was inspired to conduct a capstone project in my community because I have lived there for over a year and I have barely met those that surround me. We would do the normal wave “hello” but ultimately, I was unaware of who the people around me were. With two children, 9 and 7, that tended to play outside, it’s good to have a sense of community that would look out for them just in case. Ultimately, it came down to getting to know one another and being able to have each other’s back if there was anything wrong or questions that needed to be addressed. The project started out as a request to the HOA to see if they would accept a meeting in the form of a potluck in order to gather people in the community. They were hard to get a hold of at first, which is something that needed to be addressed, but ultimately were receptive to having a potluck meeting. We set a theme of “family gathering” which really just meant to bring what best represents your family. The date was set, the invites sent out through email, and once people arrived, there was a friendly but cautious atmosphere. People are more likely to relax once they’re fed and full so after eating, we had a Q&A session which fared well.

Section 2: Elements coming together

When you are trying to bring together perspectives of others, especially those that differ, you may be presented with a huge challenge. Every person is going to think and react differently to each scenario and situation which could be based on their own life experiences. This causes people to potentially become close-minded and unable to budge when it comes to issues at hand. Doing a potluck in the community, especially one that showcases bringing families together, softens that feeling of isolation and allows people to open up and get comfortable with one another. In my own experience, every time that we ever had a get together it involved food,
whether it be in a formal or professional setting or through a relaxed company event. People are more likely to open up and discuss what is on their minds. Again, it all depends on how comfortable they are and their own personalities.

**Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is also important in creating this capstone. The work that I am completing indicates an awareness of self and an awareness of others fairly well. Cooperating and coordinating with individuals that may not normally speak or work together shows great emotional intelligence. I am self aware in this capstone because it causes me to step out of my own comfort zone and be put in a position where I need to plan things when I would rather just sit back and observe. Doing this brings up issues that may need to be resolved which can also be another factor. This could possibly create more work in the end but it would be worth it in the long run. For awareness in others is the ability to network and speak their minds. They may have a problem or an issue and this could be the opportune time to present that.

**Creative Thinking**

Creative thinking draws from the unique ability to corroborate what’s needed to be accomplished in a positive and receptive way. This doesn’t mean to go to extremes in the sense of showboating abilities but really just thinking differently how normal processes work and mold them in a better form. For this potluck, the creative framework that I used was the way I communicated and explained how a potluck would be a good opportunity for people to get together. I will be the first to say, when it comes to verbal communication, I am not the best, but I can write a mean email. I wanted to convey that this is a safe space for all people and use food to entice others to attend. When I make it into a family business, it opens up creative avenues for families to bring
and represent their home and even their cultures. The theme of family gathering really shows the community that we have a family mindset which may not be portrayed in other places.

**Your Innovative Solution**

The project of organizing a potluck for the community and getting my neighbors together had to be inviting and entice them to come out and see what’s going on. Discussing problems that people may have seen over the time that they’ve lived in their home can be vital in retaining these people in the future. We need to make sure that this is a safe neighborhood to live in and there are people that will always have their doors open. Now this potluck wasn't just about having negative problems with the community, but also any more ideas for getting back together in a different sense. Someone even had the idea for a block party with a bouncy house which would be fantastic because it would allow the parents and children to all play and communicate with each other. Having this area where people can come together and enjoy food while also networking and safely communicating their issues is ideal. People are able to come speak up and say something that they’ve noticed or even if they have ideas for the future. They can also just come for food and company which isn’t a negative thing either.

**Section 3: Results**

For my stakeholders, those being the community itself, gain to understand that hot topics and problems will be addressed accordingly and will not be swept under the rug. There are ways the issues can be resolved where it doesn’t have to be aggressive or abrasive. There are options to come together and have productive conversation and come up with productive solutions while also networking and ensuring there is someone listening. There were roughly 15 or so people, with a few that just stopped in, that attended which is not a lot but it allowed an introductory
phase to go into effect. This potluck was slated for an hour and a half but lasted about 2 hours because people created their own sidebar conversations. This was ultimately the goal was to get to know one another and get issues resolved.

**Section 4: Conclusion**

At the end of the day, I had the thought that it would flow a lot smoother. Getting a hold of someone was ultimately the hardest part. I wanted people to exchange numbers and really address their concerns as well as get updated on any community happenings. The actual results warranted a safe space but also showed that many people just want to be left alone. With this being the first potluck or get together in the community, it was understandable that there wasn’t a huge show of people. If this were to happen again, I would have liked to have had a QR code suggestion box where those that didn’t want to verbally say anything could put down their thoughts and it be addressed accordingly. I would have also liked to do a survey because a lot of feedback that was received was verbal and it’s great to have these things recorded.
References


- Trochtenberg, R. E. (n.d.). Community Building to Community Center: A rural community’s effort to create a sustainable multi-use LGBTQ Community Center (thesis).


Section 6: Appendix

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1FSwuwGGazyl0hes2Kcfo9d8DgNFzcLAxUPR8cFuoT/Mo/edit?usp=drivesdk
join us

HOA Potluck

Sunday, 7 Apr
2PM - 330PM

everyone kindly bring a dish to share.
like you’re bringing to a family gathering

At center park area, Verado neighborhood