

## How to Organize a Neighborhood Association

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A neighborhood association is a group of neighbors who get together, share their ideas, thoughts, feelings and work cooperatively to make their neighborhood a better place to live. Before you ask your neighbors to organize, you have to convince them of the benefits of forming such neighborhood association.

Having a recognized neighborhood will give you a voice and an advocate. Neighborhood associations greatly improve the two-way communication between the city and its residents. Your neighborhood will have a clear, organized way to speak to city government with a guarantee you will be heard. You will have a tool for relating directly to both your elected city council and city service areas. This increased communication can be a resource for upcoming meetings or other community opportunities that may benefit you and your neighborhood. Moreover, you will be put in touch with your neighbors, people who share your fondness for and frustrations of your area.

When does a neighborhood need to develop a neighborhood association? Various issues help a neighborhood to acquire a sense of identity and feel a need to organize and develop a

neighborhood association; for example:

- Land use issues (location of a new school, shopping center, library, highway, etc.).
- Neighborhood improvements (additional street signs or lights, repair of a sidewalk).
- Urban design issues (historic preservation district; developing of architectural themes).
- Dealing with crime and other disturbances.

Before organizing a new neighborhood association, check for existing associations in and around your area. To discover the names and boundaries of existing associations and contact information within these organizations, check the Neighborhood Contact page on the City's Web site at [www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/urban/comdev/neighbor/nhcont.htm](http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/urban/comdev/neighbor/nhcont.htm) or call the City Urban Development Department at 441-7606. If there is an active neighborhood association in your area, consider joining it!

If you and your neighbors decide to organize your own neighborhood association, consider the following:

- Avoid overlapping boundaries with another neighborhood association (check the neighborhood map in the Lincoln telephone book).
- Identify meeting time and place for the first organizational meeting.
- Widely distribute information throughout the neighborhood

about the new association's first meeting.

- Include everyone living or owning property within the association's boundaries as a potential member.
- Keep everyone informed about association activities. A newsletter or a Web site are two ways to inform your neighborhood about the association's activities.

There are a variety of possibilities for how your neighborhood association can be organized. The type of organization will depend on the role of your neighborhood association and the available resources. There are three basic organizational models your group can choose from:

1. Charitable Organization
2. Non-Profit Incorporated Organization
3. Tax Exempt Organization – 501(c)(3)

The Funders' Group of Lincoln and Lancaster County has created a publication "How to Create a Nonprofit Organization in Nebraska" which is online at [www.lcf.org/publications4.htm](http://www.lcf.org/publications4.htm). For more information about how to become a non-profit corporation, you can check the Nebraska Department of Economic Development Web site at [assist.neded.org/npincorp.html](http://assist.neded.org/npincorp.html). The IRS Web site at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) has information about tax exempt organizations.

It is also important to remember the organizational structure that works for your neighborhood now may change in the future. Neighborhood associations change over time as they grow, mature and respond to the needs of their members.

To bring together a quite diverse group of people to reach a common goal is a difficult task. To get started, you will need to form a small group of committed neighbors who share your aspiration to form a neighborhood association. This small group of individuals is referred to as the *core group*. Members of the core group should share a common vision regarding important issues affecting the neighborhood. *Be sure to keep the size of the core group at ten or less people*. If the core group gets too large, it will become unmanageable and result in low productivity. Who should be a part of your core group? People whose views are respected by other members of the community:

- Homeowners
- Business owners
- Apartment residents, managers, owners
- Church leaders
- School teachers or administrators

Once the members of the core group have been identified and a meeting time and place have been established, develop a well-planned agenda for the first

meeting. Nobody likes to attend meetings that are unproductive and a waste of time. During this initial meeting the core group will need to:

1. Determine the boundaries of the neighborhood.
2. Develop a complete list of neighborhood residents.
3. Discuss each person's ideas concerning the problems and needs of the neighborhood.
4. Discuss goals, projects and concerns.
5. Discuss strategies to achieve common goals.
6. Identify current and potential leaders.
7. Determine special skills, talents and willingness to participate.
8. Determine a convenient time and location for members to attend meetings.
9. Determine how frequently members would like to meet.

The core group has to meet several times before it will be ready to hold meeting with the entire neighborhood. Once the entire neighborhood is involved the core group should continue meeting as an advisory board for the newly formed neighborhood association.

Source: "Neighborhood Association How To's" by City of Lincoln, Urban Development Department, 2002; "How to Organize and Maintain a Neighborhood Association" by City of Tallahassee, FL Neighborhood Services Center; Neighborhood Resource Guide 2001, Austin, TX Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department (YM)

### EXTENSION HIGHLIGHTS

#### 2004 Service Awards

Recently, University of Nebraska-Lincoln employees reaching an anniversary year of employment were honored for their work. Extension Educator Lorene Bartos (pictured) was recognized for 35 years of service. Extension Associate Karen Wobig was recognized for 5 years of service.



#### Public Notice

The Lancaster County Board of Commissioners seek members of the community to serve on the Lancaster County Extension Board. The vacancies will be filled with terms beginning in January 2005.

Extension Board members represent and assist University of Nebraska Extension staff in Lancaster County with priority issue areas that include Agricultural Profitability and Sustainability; Children, 4-H, Youth and Families; Food Safety, Health and Wellness, Strengthening Nebraska Communities and Water Quality and Environment. The Board meets monthly.

Registered Lancaster County voters interested in serving a three-year term should complete an application for appointment by November 1, 2004. Additional information and an application can be obtained from the Lancaster County Extension office located at 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln, NE 68528-1507, or phone 441-7180. Online applications are available at <http://interline.ci.lincoln.ne.us/cnty/commiss/boardapp.pdf> (GB)

## Rick Carter Celebrates First Anniversary at Human Services Federation

Susanne Blue  
Vice President of  
Human Services Federation

Rick Carter, executive director, recently celebrated his first anniversary with the Human Services Federation (HSF). HSF attributes a successful year to Carter's strong and innovative leadership. Carter came to HSF with extensive experience in management and political consulting.

HSF is comprised of 106 member agencies dedicated to the provision of quality health and human services in Lincoln and Lancaster County, working to continually inform, involve, strengthen and increase the capacity and effectiveness of non-profits and the non-profit sector in our community.

In operation since 1982, HSF provides many programs, including publishing the *Community Connections Resource Guide*

and assembles the Human Services section of the *Blue Pages* in conjunction with Alltel for inclusion in the phone book.

Under Carter, HSF developed a new mission statement: "The Federation supports its member agencies through education,

networking and the power of collective action." An example of how this mission works to build the capacity and effectiveness of its membership is through collaborative, educational and advocacy endeavors that promote the delivery of accountable and professional human services in our community.

HSF also works to bring member agencies' collective power together to educate policy makers and the community on



the services available and the impact some decisions have on those services. In addition, HSF works to lower administrative costs through pooled purchasing arrangements such as an Employee Assistance Program and

special projects like our Financial Outsourcing Project, where small agencies are given assistance with their bookkeeping and accounting services as a way to strengthen the agency. HSF is also developing a series of "Best Practices" handbooks to assist agencies in developing strong policies and procedures, thus strengthening the community as a whole.

To learn more about HSF, contact Rick Carter at 441-4399 or go to [www.hsfed.org](http://www.hsfed.org).

Note: UNL Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County is a member of HSF.

## Nebraska Disaster-Affected Persons Please Note

Some people who were affected by the tornados and storms that swept through Nebraska from the end of May to early June of 2004 are in need of additional assistance with their recovery process. The Nebraska Disaster Recovery Organization (NDRO) is assisting people with unmet needs by meeting with them, helping to evaluate what is needed, and working to locate resources to meet those needs.

If you are in need of such services, please call the Nebraska Rural Response Hotline at the number listed below and ask to be referred to the "unmet needs" process.

If you are able to make a financial contribution to help others in needs, use the same toll-free number to do so.

**Nebraska Rural Response Hotline 1-800-464-0258 • [www.nebraskadisasterrecovery.org](http://www.nebraskadisasterrecovery.org)**