

## From “Communicating Your Village”

May 12, 2015

### Messaging

Remember some people need to learn first what a “village” is, then about your particular village.

The driving purpose of your communication plan is to convey the value of your village to various groups (potential volunteers, potential members, businesses who could sponsor village activities, etc.)

The message will vary depending on whom you are addressing neighbors, local businesses, etc. Perceived benefits of getting involved vary.

The general public also needs to learn about your village. For example, *Little Falls Village* is involving high school students who need student service learning hours.

Underlying theme for all: COMMUNITY

### Determining your focus

Social: Example, *Maplewood Village* chose to focus on helping neighbors to get to know one another. Later perhaps their activities will expand to enabling neighbors to help each other.

Village focus could emerge organically as volunteers gravitate toward doing what they enjoy. (For example, drive, provide computer support, walk dogs, hold book discussions, organize walking groups, etc.)

### Ideas that have worked (“Laundry List”)

- Use multiple methods to communicate—don’t over-rely on any one method but evaluate the effectiveness of each
- Connect with organizations operating within the same jurisdiction as your village (civic associations, other local organizations)
- Tap into their communication media (newsletters, list serves, etc.)
- Hold community meetings (*Takoma Park Village*)
- Conduct community surveys (*Bradley Hills*)
- “Sneaker mail”: volunteers deliver flyers about the village or its activities door to door
- “Walking billboards”: volunteers walk around wearing t-shirts with the Village logo hoping it will spur conversation (“walking mouthpiece”) (*Chevy Chase at Home* example)
- Use “block captains” to split up the promotion job into manageable chunks
- Real estate agents (*Potomac Community Village* benefits from generosity of an agent who provides free printing)
- Have a table at community events: (Potomac Day)
- Anniversary/birthday events to celebrate the village, thank sponsors and volunteers
- Inventory everyone you know who can help get the word out
- “High touch” activities—take the highly personal approach. Asking a person to do something is the surest way to get them to do something.
- Try holding intergenerational events. Career day, mentoring, etc.
- Telephone calls and phone trees

- Refrigerator magnets containing contact info for the village (one example cost \$750 for 1400 homes)
- Work with other village to promote each other's activities.
- Try to keep in mind needs of those with visual and hearing impairments.
- Develop an "elevator speech" which succinctly describes your village and its activities
- Host speakers to explore topics likely to be of interest

### **Logistics**

Schools are not expensive to rent (*Little Falls Village, Wyngate*) but posters need to state that village-orchestrated events held there are not supported by MCPS.

Tap into resources of other organizations (JCA's Village Rides; Mental Health Association's Friendly Visitor program, Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center etc.)

Could try a "time share" model to help people both feel more willing to volunteer and more comfortable asking for assistance.

Plan ahead to create a system to deal with emergency weather events (*Hyattsville, City of Rockville, Chevy Chase at Home*)

### **Stay connected to each other and the broader village movement**

Pazit Aviv's monthly villages updates are located here:

<http://wavevillages.org/index.php/groups/montgomery-county>

Washington Area Village Exchange (<http://wavevillages.org/>)

Village to Village Network ([www.vtvnetwork.org/](http://www.vtvnetwork.org/))