

Process of Community Building By Carefree Kathy

Community building begins the moment we take on our adjective names in a Basic Workshop and continues as part of our process of building trust in the individuals that comprise our community. A sense of community is developed through trust, empathy, encouragement and play. The context of community is also reinforced by the egalitarian way in which we set up and conduct the workshop (e.g., setting up the chairs in a circle and, as exercise presenters, sitting as much as possible with the participants (rather than standing to lead an exercise)).

We can also bring our artistic talents to use when we “Imagine a Better Community.” (Basic Manual, E-28) This time we are creating community within our small groups of four to five participants by envisioning a world where much is possible. This is followed by making real that which was just envisioned in our artwork as we take the next step of commitment. The facilitator passes out index cards on which we individually create a positive goal and develop steps to achieve it. When we exchange our commitment cards with one another, we have added the strength we get from each other to create this new community.

All we need is to find that brother or sister who can encourage us on this journey of self discovery in building (as Martin Luther King Jr. once said) “the beloved community.”

Kathy Smith is an “outside” facilitator from the San Diego Hands of Peace/AVP Program. She volunteers in Donovan State Prison and Centinela State Prison.