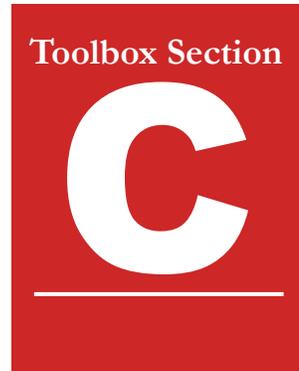




## 4. Hosting a Stone Soup Event: An Exercise in Building Social Capital



### Introduction

Social Capital is the collection of relationships, networks, norms, and social trust that increase accountability and willingness to act collectively for the mutual benefit of all neighbors. Neighborhoods with a high level of social capital tend to be more successful at responding to challenges and change that occurs in all neighborhoods. When social capital is low, residents may lose confidence in the neighborhood and stop putting forth the effort required to maintain a vital neighborhood. Now more than ever, communities are exploring opportunities to leverage scarce resources. The underlying message of a Stone Soup Event is that everyone can contribute to the pot.

A Stone Soup Event is an opportunity to hear the concerns of your neighbors and identify possible solutions. The event may take on many forms with participants bringing ingredients for an actual soup or an ice cream sundae bar or as a symbolic event to solicit input. Regardless of the path you choose, the steps below will help you get started.

Step	Explanation
<b>Getting started</b>	<p>If you are part of an existing an association or group, this is a responsibility you may assign to the social committee. If you are not part of an existing group, you may use the skills of your family members and neighbors to plan the event.</p> <p>You must first consider the reason for your event. Is it to generate interest in forming a neighborhood association? Are you trying to find out what people are concerned about? Do you want create an opportunity for neighbors to meet each other informally? Answering these questions when help determine the tone of the event, the location, and what should be included on the invitation or flyer.</p> <p>The soup, ice cream, or other food is simply the carrot to entice participants. Decide what type of treat you will have and ask participants to bring something to contribute to the menu. For example, if you are making actual soup, the host(s) provides the “stone” (soup bone or broth) and the pot. The participants would bring vegetables, crackers, bowls, spoons, drinks, etc. to complete the menu. If you are having ice cream, the host would provide a basic flavor of ice cream such as vanilla with participants providing additional flavors, nuts, sprinkles, chocolate syrup, and so on.</p> <p>The host or organizer maintains a sign up sheet to ensure that all necessary items will be available for the event.</p>



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<b>Establish a date &amp; location</b>	<p>When setting a date, consider the time of year and any special holidays. If your neighbors usually celebrate St. Patrick’s Day or another common holiday, you may consider incorporating the holiday theme. If your event is an outdoor event, be mindful of the time of day and during summer months mosquitoes are a concern.</p> <p>The location of the event should be amenable to the size of your expected group and your scheduled activities. For example, if you are having soup, your location should have a stove or accommodate electric devices to keep the soup heated. Likewise if you choose an ice cream sundae bar, there should be a freezer nearby (or dry ice) and ample room to spread out toppings. There should also be tables and chairs available for use.</p> <p>For the best participation, try to choose a location close to the neighborhood.</p>
<b>Delegating assignments &amp; responsibilities</b>	<p>In keeping with the Stone Soup theme, the load is always lighter when shared by two or more people. Delegating assignments will not only prevent burn out, but foster team spirit and the sense that everyone’s skills are appreciated. Possible assignments may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Invitation/flyer design</li><li>- Distribution of invitations</li><li>- Maintenance of RSVP list and sign up sheet</li><li>- Room set up</li><li>- Greeters and servers</li><li>- Clean up crew</li></ul> <p>Create a master supply list for every area of responsibility. Inform all volunteers of assignments and any required deadlines. Indicate to the time all volunteers are expected to arrive at the event.</p>
<b>Promoting your event</b>	<p>There are many ways to promote your event. Some simple approaches include distributing flyers, utilizing e-mail, signs, community calendars, organization website, and newsletters.</p> <p>You may use <a href="http://www.jooners.com">www.jooners.com</a> or <a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/">http://groups.yahoo.com/</a> to send out reminders and to maintain a sign up sheet.</p>
<b>What happens when neighbors arrive</b>	<p>When neighbors arrive, be sure everyone signs in and provides contact information. All attendees should receive an agenda. Greeters should provide directions to those bringing food items and other supplies. Additionally, let neighbors know if there are toys or coloring pages for children and direct them to the seating area or refreshment area (this will depend on your scheduled activities). You may serve your food of choice at the start of the event or after opening remarks.</p>

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Step	Explanation
<b>What happens when neighbors arrive</b> <i>(continued)</i>	<p>The friendliness of the greeters and servers is very important to the atmosphere of the event. Equally important is an opening or welcome statement from the host.</p> <p>Many people may not have heard the Fable of the Stone Soup. If you have an animated or dramatic reader, reading the fable before serving the “stone soup” will emphasize the importance of the gathering and help with the delivery of your social capital message. Another option is to have a small group act out the story as someone narrates it. At a minimum one or more copies of the story should be placed on each table.</p>
<b>Activity suggestions</b>	<p>Remember the purpose for hosting the event and structure your activities to accomplish that purpose. Below are the steps for a possible activity.</p> <p><b>To Generate Interest in Organizing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Distribute three note cards to all attendees. Make sure everyone has something to write with.</li><li>▪ On the first, each person writes 3 things they like about their neighborhood. It is not necessary for anyone to write their name on the card. Have a volunteer collect the cards.</li><li>▪ On the second card, each person writes 3 things they would like to change. Collect the cards and keep them in a separate stack or basket.</li><li>▪ On the third card, each person must list what they are willing to do in order to strengthen and preserve the neighborhood. <i>(It would be helpful to have images that express neighborliness around the room to provide examples. Use images from magazines, create posters, or download images from the internet.)</i></li><li>▪ Share with the audience that just as the villagers in the fable brought forth individual contributions, the combination of resources brought forth a wonderful meal and met the need of the village. Every neighborhood is brimming with untapped resources that can be organized for the collective benefit of the community. With the above steps you will:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identify what is working in the neighborhood (the stone)</li><li>- Identify challenges facing the neighborhood (the hunger)</li><li>- Identify possible solutions (the water)</li><li>- Create a sense of excitement and connection ( the added ingredients)</li></ul></li></ul>



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<p><b>Activity suggestions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effective leadership will shape the foundation of your new group. Ask for volunteers to serve as part of the core planning group. Explain the responsibilities involved. Volunteers who helped organize the event may also like to participate as part of the core team. <i>(Refer to Organizing a Neighborhood Association or the Neighborhood Organizing Guide for details.)</i></li> <li>▪ Provide each participant with a postcard that lists the benefits of a neighborhood association.</li> <li>▪ Provide a date for your next meeting.</li> <li>▪ Encourage participants to talk to other neighbors and invite them to the meeting.</li> <li>▪ You are now on the path to neighborhood success</li> </ul> <p>Existing Organizations: The note card activity may be used to refocus priorities, to set new goals, or to generate new ideas. Whether your group is new or seasoned, neighbors must continue to celebrate what is working their neighborhoods and look for opportunities to connect with other neighbors.</p> <p>The Stone Soup Event is wonderful activity for engaging neighbors and organizing resources.</p>
<p><b>Suggestions and Other Considerations</b></p>	<p>The Fable of the Stone Soup [Attachment A]</p> <p>Electronic Sign-up Sheet/Assign Volunteer Responsibilities <a href="http://www.jooners.com/">http://www.jooners.com/</a></p> <p>Access the Neighborhood Organizing Guide at <a href="http://www.GarlandVitalNeighborhoods.org">www.GarlandVitalNeighborhoods.org</a></p> <p>Refer to Organizing a Neighborhood Association Tip Sheet [location]</p> <p>Contact the Office of Neighborhood Vitality with additional questions <a href="mailto:fconner@ci.garland.tx.us">fconner@ci.garland.tx.us</a> or 972-205-3864</p>