

How do we know when we have community?

- The individual person, in relationship with another person, is at the center, not an agency.
- There is quick response to human needs, literally within minutes, with one person responding to another in times of need. Systems take days, weeks, forever, if ever.
- People thrive on stories about changes in people's lives, not studies of data.
- We depend on celebrations and personal accomplishments (achieved in relationships), instead of unnecessary paperwork.
- The most important things are informal, instead of emphasis on formality.
- Who we are is defined by who we are as people, instead of by titles on an organizational chart.
- Efforts are based on capacities of what people can do, can give, can learn, instead of deficiencies which concentrate on measuring what people can't do, can't give, and can't learn.
- We are all, handicapped or not, citizens, not clients or consumers.
- Decisions are made by consent, not control. Emphasis is on consensus instead of simply "getting things done" through exercise of power.
- There is real caring, not "service." Caring means the willingness to walk in the life of another person, sharing another's suffering and joys. Service systems cannot tolerate suffering, and do not understand joy. A system can't stand tragedy (ironically, systems are tragic).
- In community, suffering is not driven away. In systems, suffering is hidden from consciousness.
- In community, we see the gifts of all people, bureaucracies see people with handicaps as a collection of chores to be worked on.
- In community, we work with people. Systems work on people.

I am extremely excited about these possibilities for the future. Right now, these are hopes and dreams, which I hope we can share. God willing, we can, and we will make these dreams come true.

These thoughts are John McKnight's
expressed by Dave Wetherow at the
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