

Cultivating Community Hubs for Social Connection

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The Issue

Community hubs are places where people of all backgrounds can gather to socialize, learn and work together, and develop trusting relationships. Community hubs make it easier to feel a sense of belonging. Often, people think about community centers, parks, and schools as community hubs. Many other community spaces and organizations can also serve that role—even those initiated for other reason, like libraries and YMCAs.

Webinar Summary & Highlights

Lynn Crawford, VP of Membership, Marketing, and Leadership Development for the YMCA of Greensboro (NC) and Jamar O. Rahming, Executive Director of the Wilmington (DE) Institute Free Library shared how they purposefully expanded beyond the walls of their buildings to create intergenerational and culturally meaningful connection opportunities that reduce social isolation and increase a sense of wellbeing. Their experiences can inspire other organizations to serve as community hubs.

- An organization’s mission and history may highlight how supporting social health is already part of their mission. The YMCA and public libraries have always been gathering places for people.
- Community organizations can support social connection through both design and programming, and these intentional efforts have rippling effects as people form relationships and continue connecting on their own.
- Partnerships expand the reach and impact of community hubs, and can improve equitable access to resources and services. For example, the Greensboro YMCA partners with the City Parks and Recreation Department and the Wilmington Public Library partners with barbershops.
- Asset mapping can be used to pinpoint organizations that are providing needed services, and duplication and gaps in offerings which can help determine how partnerships can collectively create a more socially connected community.

Access key information from the webinar: [recording](#) and [slide deck](#).

Resources

Libraries

- [Rooted in connection: Libraries designing for belonging and community](#). This article from WebJunction offers six strategies to help libraries strengthen social connections.
- [Hubs of Hope: How Libraries Foster Equity, Learning, and Collective Action](#). Across the U.S., libraries are stepping up as changemakers by addressing social issues, promoting health equity, and strengthening civic engagement. This Community Commons resource describes how libraries are dynamic community hubs that foster connection, learning, and community action.
- [Beyond Books: How Twin Cities prioritize play](#). This local news article highlights how Twin City libraries keep play spaces fresh and inviting for learning and social connection.

YMCAs

- [Community Wellbeing: What does it mean for YMCAs?](#) This first article in a YMCA Vision 2030 series explores how YMCAs are uniquely positioned to positively impact wellbeing.
- [Y-USA Social Connectedness & Healthy Aging Evaluation](#). The YMCA of the USA implemented a program to improve social connectedness among older adults. NORC at the University of Chicago evaluated it and found a positive impact.

Other

- [Social Prescribing USA](#). Using social prescribing, health professionals prescribe non-clinical community activities to improve patient health. Social prescribing addresses social determinants of health, including social connection. This website offers an evidence library and links to social prescribing efforts from across the globe.
- [Museums as Hubs for Well-Being](#). This case study describes utilizing museums for meet ups to reduce social isolation and improve social connection.

