BUILDING COMMUNITY

TEAMWORK IS IMPORTANT

ED U. GATOR'S CLASS VOTE

REBA MCENTIRE IS GIVING SOMETHING BACK
It’s important for a person to feel like he’s part of a community. Schools are communities. So are churches and temples, neighborhoods, towns and cities.

In the dictionary, a community is described as “a group of people living and working together.” “Together” is the important word here, because if everyone in a community kept to themselves and did their own thing, there would be no community! Communities depend on people contributing their skills and helping each other.

We all have some things we do really well, and some things others do a whole lot better. That’s where teamwork comes in. Think about a baseball team: you’ve got to have a good pitcher, a good catcher, good runners, good fielders and good hitters. And then all those talented players have to work together well. That’s called cooperation. So if your team has good players and good cooperation, chances are you’ll win a bunch of games! Your team has built a happy and successful community!

So, how can you contribute to building your community? How can you be a good player on your community team? Well, it starts by caring about and helping others in your neighborhood, in your school or in your town. It might be as simple as picking up trash on a street corner, or getting together with friends at a local recreation center. It might be helping out with a food drive or fund-raiser at your place of worship. It might be pitching in to paint an old school or a park bench on a Saturday.

Every little bit of help, caring, teamwork and cooperation goes a long way to building a community. And the best part is getting to know other responsible people in the community, just like you!

**ACTIVITY:**

You probably know someone in your neighborhood, or in your school, who works especially hard to make that community successful. This person is probably a good helper and a great team player. What does this person do that’s a good example of building community?
Hi, friends, Ed here. It sure has been an interesting week at our school. Last Monday, Ms. Gloria, our principal, made a special announcement. She was starting a committee to look into ways to improve our school community, and wanted us to nominate, and elect, a student representative. She asked us to write down two names of kids whom we thought helped out a lot in our school.

Tuesday morning at announcements, she told us the election was between a gator named Boris Greenleaf, who was always volunteering at the school library, and a croc named Judy Longtail, who had been a great hall monitor for two years. They were both outstanding candidates! It was going to be hard to decide. Ms. Gloria asked us to think about it all week, and we’d vote Friday afternoon.

Well, a very strange thing happened to our school community that week. Although I thought either Boris or Judy would be great for the job, most of the students were pretty divided on the issue. Kids made up posters and fliers for each candidate. Wednesday afternoon after school, there were rallies for both students on opposite sides of the playground. It seemed like each group was trying to see who could outshout the other!

Thursday morning I noticed two kids who used to be great friends saying mean things to each other, all over this silly election! Mr. Salam Ander had to stomp on the floor in class because there was so much arguing and bickering that he couldn’t get our attention. Then at recess the whole situation got even more ridiculous, when a bunch of crocs and gators started pushing and shoving each other. Finally, Ms. Gloria ran outside and broke it up. Then she said something that made us all feel a little ashamed. “This election was meant to help our school community, not tear it apart! What we need here is cooperation and teamwork, not arguing and fighting!”

Well, that really calmed everybody down. I think most of us realized that we had forgotten what this election was all about. On Friday we all voted, and before we left for the day, Ms. Gloria announced that Judy Longtail was our new student representative. Ms. Gloria said that since Judy had won fair and square, she hoped we could all get together and work toward making our school the best it could be.

When the bell rang, everyone rushed outside to congratulate Judy, even the crocs and gators who had voted for Boris. Boris came outside and gave Judy a handshake and a hug, and told her he’d be happy to help her in any way she needed with her new responsibility. Probably a hundred kids stood and sat around that afternoon laughing and talking about the election and the school in general. It was a tough week here, and a hard lesson to learn, but I think now our sense of school community is stronger than ever!

QUESTIONS

1) Why did Ms. Gloria think a committee and an election would help the school community?

2) Why did Ed think Judy and Boris were both good candidates? What do you think would make someone a good candidate for this position in your school?

3) How did the students react to the election?

4) Why did Ms. Gloria say the students were tearing down the community instead of building it up?

5) What happened after the election that made Ed think the community was stronger than ever?

6) If you were elected student representative, what kind of improvements would you work toward in your school community?
DIFFERENT SKILLS MAKE A GREAT TEAM

Directions: Think of a group of your friends who would make a great team of community helpers. List their names below. Then next to each name describe each person’s skills that would make him or her a helpful member of your team.

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IN THE NEWSPAPER

Directions: Many times in the newspaper there are articles about people who are especially helpful in their communities. That community could be a town, a city, the state, the country or the whole world. Find one of these stories, and in the space below, describe in your own words what that person did that helped build his/her community.

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________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

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NOW IT’S YOUR TURN

Directions: Can you think of someone you know personally who would make a great subject for a newspaper article about building community? In a few sentences, tell their interesting story below. Do you have a photograph to go with your article? If not, can you draw this person’s picture next to your story?

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very afternoon at 3:30, right after school, Michael rode his bicycle to the corner of Chase and Montcrest Streets, where he met the man who drove the Lewistown Globe van.

The Globe was Lewistown’s only evening newspaper, and it was Michael’s responsibility to deliver it to the 54 customers in his community, rain or shine. Michael adored his job. He loved riding his bike throughout the familiar neighborhood streets, and never tired of the thrill of tossing the paper within inches of the same spot on every lawn, every single day.

Michael also appreciated the interesting people he met on his paper route. There was Mr. Richards, forever polishing his beautiful antique Ford Model T. There was Mrs. Walters, jogging behind her three golden retrievers. There were the Travis twins, playing baseball, football, kickball or Frisbee on their front lawn. And there was Alice Thompson, on her porch in her ancient wicker rocking chair, drinking lemonade and reading the Bible.

Alice was a fascinating lady, and sometimes Michael would spend too long sitting with her, listening to old stories about Lewistown’s history. All of these characters in the community were like Michael’s extended family. He counted on them to be there in their customary spots, as much as they relied on him to deliver the news.

Michael could have written his own paper about the neighborhood because, without ever being nosey, he knew everything important that was going on in every house on his route. He knew when Tommy Travis sprained his ankle. He knew when Mr. Richards’ eldest daughter got engaged. He was the first to know when Mrs. Walter’s third child was born. And he always knew when Alice’s grandkids were coming to visit, because she talked about it for weeks. In a funny way, Michael was the center of his community. He liked it that way, and so did his 54 satisfied customers.

One cool day in late April, something was terribly wrong. Sure, Michael had seen Mr. Richards polishing his Model T. He had ridden past Mrs. Walters and her three dogs, and he had waved to the Travis twins playing kickball on their front lawn. But when he got to Alice Thompson’s house, the old wicker rocking chair was empty.

“That’s so strange,” thought Michael as he steered his bike into her driveway. “She hasn’t missed a visit for two and a half years!” Michael walked up to the front door and knocked gently. No answer. He knocked a little louder. Still no answer. “Mrs. Thompson!” he called through the old screen door. Then suddenly he thought he heard something. He listened carefully and there it was again. A faint voice calling from upstairs. Michael opened the door, walked inside and called her name again. This time he heard it loud and clear.

“Michael!” It was Alice. “I need help!” she cried. Michael ran up the stairs and found Mrs. Thompson, lying on her side in the upstairs hallway. “I think I’ve broken my hip,” she said. “Please call the hospital.” Michael got through to the ambulance, and within minutes he and Alice could hear the siren pulling down her street. “What would I have done if you hadn’t been bringing my paper?” she asked, holding Michael’s hand in hers.

“Thank goodness we don’t have to think about that, do we?” Michael said. He followed the ambulance to the hospital on his bicycle. When he saw that Alice was going to be okay, he rode back to the neighborhood to finish delivering the evening paper. Some of the folks in the community got their Globe a little later than usual that day, but under the circumstances, they were very understanding.
Reba McEntire is one of the most famous and successful musical artists in the world. She could fill a warehouse with her seemingly endless array of entertainment awards. She was named Female Vocalist of the Year from the Country Music Association four years in a row, and has won countless other honors from the Academy of Country Music, the American Music Awards, the People’s Choice Awards and the Grammies. Several of her songs like *Whoever’s in New England*, *The Last One to Know* and *Have I Got a Deal for You*, have become country standards.

Not satisfied with just being a household name in the realm of music, McEntire turned to acting, landing roles in several feature and television films. In addition, she has authored a best-selling autobiography. Whew, that schedule of entertainment commitments would keep anybody busy! But somehow, McEntire has found time to give back to her community in many wonderful ways.

For years, McEntire worked hard for an organization called Habitat for Humanity, which, literally, “built communities.” Habitat is dedicated to building houses and selling them to low-income families at no profit. Habitat and McEntire’s efforts have provided many needy families with a safe and secure place to live and an opportunity to be part of a community. The money from the sale of these homes went right back into a Fund for Humanity, to support future community-building projects.

In 1996, McEntire left Habitat for Humanity, and devoted her volunteer time and energy to the school system. She is currently the spokesperson and honorary chair for the Schools Now Campaign, which raises money and community support for education by selling coupon books. During a two week period in 1995-96, schools raised $700,000! In 1996, the goal was $1,000,000. With McEntire’s help, and the dedicated teamwork of students, teachers, and families across the state, anything is possible!

Reba McEntire is a great example of someone willing to help others by helping to build her community.

**VOCABULARY:**

Array: a large display.
Standard: in musical terms, a classic; common.
A household name: a very well known person.
Realm: a region or area.
Literally: based on the actual words in their usual meaning.
1) Cooperation and teamwork are difficult concepts to convey to kids who still believe they are “the center of the universe.” Sharing, helping, and working together with others may not be exactly what your child has in mind, or sees as in his best interests. Look for opportunities to promote cooperation in non-threatening situations; when your child has little to lose and when it can be shown that in the end, “everyone wins.”

2) It’s a sad reality that very few of us get to know even our closest neighbors on the street where we live. In some cases, our communities have been reduced to our own immediate families in our own houses. We might benefit from our association with other people in the neighborhood. Who knows when you might need a neighbor’s assistance, or when you could be the one around to help somebody else? There might be some other families with kids your age a block or two away. It will certainly benefit your child to realize he is an important small part of a bigger community picture.

3) Although their ability sometimes falls behind their enthusiasm, kids can learn to be great helpers around the house. Kids are often eager to help with a household task, especially if this task has always been designated as an “adult” chore. It helps also if the job is presented in a fun and creative way. This is a great opportunity to promote the concept of teamwork, too. Demonstrate to your child how, when all the members of your family contribute to completing a project, you make a great team and everyone benefits.

4) Teach your child what it means to be a responsible member of the community. That community may be the neighborhood, school, a place of worship, the town, the city or the state. A community builder does many things outlined in the Project: Solution series: he or she gives service, demonstrates honesty, nurtures family and friends, models democracy, does the right thing, takes initiative and respects others. All of these positive character traits will benefit your child, your family and the community at large.

**FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Many communities are filled with kids, but few communities have a safe, fun place for kids to gather and enjoy themselves. Imagine you and your family have the resources to build a recreation center in your neighborhood. With your child, design this special, kid-safe community center, and decide together what kinds of activities would take place there.

**RESOURCES**


**FAMILY PLEDGE CARD**

Our family has completed the Family Page together.

__________________________
Child’s name

Family members:

__________________________    _____________________

__________________________    _____________________

School: __________________________

Teacher/grade: __________________________