

# Community Builder: Module One

**Nobody knows the age of the human race, but everybody agrees that it is old enough to know better.**  
<http://www.rare-leadership.org/>

## Why Community Building: What's in It for You, Me and the Rest of Us?

### Getting Our Bearings

Have you noticed? Society is changing so fast; we can't seem to keep up. A recent article in the online journal ExtremeTech says, "After 50 years, Moore's Law has become cultural shorthand for innovation itself." Moore's Law has already gone through three iterations/changes and now all bets are off. The rate of change is accelerating. Cars that drive themselves are now being tested and virtual neural programming may offer humankind significant relief from pain.

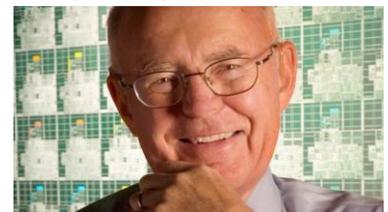
~~It happened so fast.~~ It is happening so fast. Twenty-five years ago cell phones didn't exist and the internet was in its infancy, today, cell phones are prevalent in many third world countries and they have become a building block via micro-finance for economic development. Then, 199 people per 100,000 survived various forms of cancer. According to Cancer Research UK "Today, more than half of those with cancer will survive for at least ten years."

Then, the Hubble Space Telescope was launched into space and some two dozen astronauts had flown into orbit around planet earth. As of March 2016, there have been 222 people who made 379 spaceflights to the International Space Station from 18 countries.

The Journal of the American Medical Association, reports the U.S. death rate for all causes declined 43% between 1969 and 2013. News media rarely covers the impressive decline in illiteracy, disease, and violence. The world's population living in poverty has declined by 50% since 1990. U.S. household net worth hit \$81.5 trillion, an all-time record.

How does community building fit into this changing world? We'll show you how.

Moore's Law – “the observation that, over the history of computing hardware, the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit has doubled approximately every two years.”



**Gordon Moore**

First, think about how you define community? What do you want to change? How can you balance your desire to serve with your work, your family and anything else where you invest your passion? These are all important questions to consider as you prepare to become a skilled and knowledgeable community builder.

Other places, other times when Johnny Appleseed was planting those apple trees at river junctions and along river beds, he was preparing the area for the communities that were to become towns and cities. In those days it was common for neighbors to gather together and help each other with the harvest and to build homes and barns. In Vietnam, neighbors still help each other pick and dry tea leaves and coffee beans.

Today when neighbors get together, they might volunteer with a community recycling event or cleanup, patrol a section of town with gang violence to help police or knit hats for working poor. The local neighborhood gatherings 50, 100 or 200 years ago are now replaced with volunteers with nonprofit organizations like Neighborhood Watch, Habitat for Humanity and Doctors Without Borders. We have disaster preparedness committees and projects like a local tool lending library and food co-ops. Community projects have taken new forms to meet critical community needs.

Abundance in our world has also totally changed what we do and how we do it. Our schedules are full of screen time--whether television, computer or smartphone--sports events and entertainment. Even communication itself has morphed into sound bites and pictures.

Think about how that affects you, your family and community. Do you know your neighbors? How is your air quality? How can your life change for the better? What activities does your family do together? How would you like to see your life change?

Today as our world builds on and adapts to change, it also builds on community. Without community, industry and technology would hardly exist and have little impact. Community is the channel for commerce. Community creates a safe and supportive environment, it connects people with food, friends, shelter and possibility.

**“Johnny Appleseed”** was born as Jonathan Chapman in Massachusetts on September 26, 1775. Chapman earned his nickname because he planted small orchards and individual apple trees during his travels as he walked across 100,000 square miles of Midwestern wilderness and prairie.



In Capetown, South Africa, Vicky Ntozini, had a vision that is becoming a dream come true as a result of her community building. People were forced to move to the Cape Flats under the Group Areas Act, a segregationist law under apartheid. There are about a half million people living here. Crime is rampant, 70% of the population live in shacks of wood and corrugated metal. One in three has to walk more than 200 meters to get to a fresh water supply. It's a tough place.

Vicky was determined to create a better place for her and her five children and this township. In the late 90s, in her mid-twenties, the roots of her B&B began to form when she opened up her home to tourists and students. She had hopes of helping visitors understand the results of apartheid and township life better. Many travelers visited and she added a room here and there. Guests noted Vicky's amazing hospitality, delicious cooking, and how welcomed they felt. Vicki called it her "social immersion" program. Vicki's B&B got positive listings in Lonely Planet and other guides. Through these connections, Vicky solicited donations for food, supplies, and equipment to the township. She helped organize gift deliveries for children during Christmas. She was a force for positive change.



View from Vicky's Bed and Breakfast, Khayelitsha, South Africa

A community that is not efficient or well-organized creates problems. It can hold people back from growth. Many resist culture change. Sadly, in 2012, Vicky Ntozini was murdered by her husband, jealous of her success.

No one is self-sufficient; we rely on each other, in fact, human beings are necessarily dependent on each other. If you really look at your village, town or city, you'll soon see that the success and happiness of individuals is determined by the quality of life in the community.

### Inspirations

Whether in a township in South Africa, a metropolis in Japan, or an Eskimo village, the quality of life depends on the communities, individuals and leaders within. Those who are elected, who take the initiative to create order and change, even those who fall into the position of leadership and adapting, have the opportunity to build, preserve--and even destroy their communities.

For many years, I've chosen to volunteer and serve within my community. It's in my genetics. But community service is not for everyone. As I gain skills in building community, I continue to learn. As I learn, I see that I continue to make a difference, a little bit at a time. I participate in the act of managing change to create a better life for me, for you, for my family and neighbors and those action transfer to society.

When I first studied nonprofit management I found a calling, my niche. Most of the students in my classes were there to learn and help their nonprofit succeed. Some had a lot of passion and many had a unique combination of a desire to learn and passion. Most students were there to gather resources, study and become better leaders for their organizations. They were great examples of combining mindfulness with passion.

As a class project at Lewis & Clark College, my friends Lynn Ervin and Lorenzo Nicholson and I decided that we would design and try to start a scholarship program for nonprofit training. This special program would be for people of color and those with disabilities. Our advisor, Suzanne Feeney, helped us focus and reach out to business organizations with similar priorities. We quickly gained allies and easily funded our first students with a grant from Portland General Electric. Completing the project was inspirational for us and empowering for the students involved.

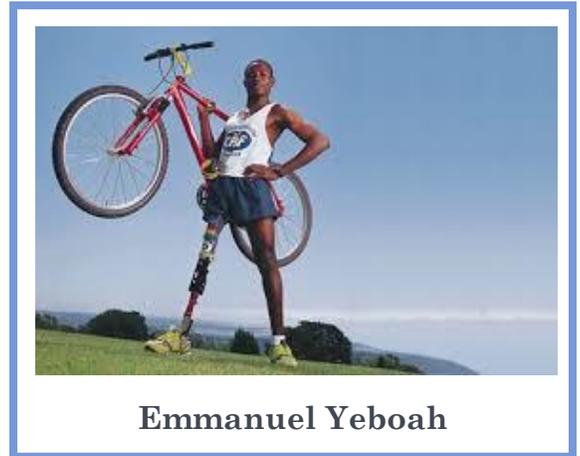
Community involvement for me is self-affirming and helps me feel better about myself, my neighbors and where I live. It also helps my community. Community action helps to make positive changes that make life better for everyone. Right now, I'm making a dynamic leap to integrate what I've learned from books and writings, classes and studies and through local activism. I've got a lot to share, the result is this Community Builder series.

What about you? How well do you know yourself? Where do your strengths come in? What are your dreams? What do you want to see different in your life and community? What brought you to community building? What do you want your community to be and do? What are the edges of your capacity to learn and change? How would you describe your community's capacity to learn and change? Asking important questions is the start toward making your imprint for a thriving community.

We have the solutions to make a better life, but we aren't implementing them. If human stupidity or immaturity factors into your community culture, there are strategies and interventions that can be effective in many situations. If you are ready and think that you're ready to gain new perspectives and focus on answering such questions, then maybe you are ready make the next leap forward, for yourself and your community.

Beware, once you've made the decision to help build community you've increased your vulnerabilities. Taking a leadership role and wanting to introduce change takes guts. Be prepared for resistance, negativity and degrading comment. You may be ignored and laughed at, and, you may fail. Maybe no one will show up. You may also be successful! Be bold and take the initiative. Look at other people who've put themselves on the line to create positive change. We can all use inspiration in our lives.

The following community leaders among many have excelled in fulfilling important roles in community building. Rosa Parks sat on the bus when others told her not to and she refused to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger, spurring the Montgomery boycott and other efforts to end segregation. Jamie Escalante motivated street kids to study advanced physics. He took a class of predominantly Latino, inner-city students, whom others said couldn't learn, and taught them to master calculus. He did so well, that in 1982 every student in his class nailed the AP Calculus exam, nearly half with a perfect score. Ghanaian, Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah, was born with a deformed leg. In Ghana, the disabled are often shunned or even murdered at birth in Africa. Fortunately, he was a loved son. At 27 years old, Emmanuel was determined to be a part of society and after receiving a bicycle, thanks to a grant for handicapped athletes from America, rode across Ghana, challenging stereotypes of the disabled in the process.



**Emmanuel Yeboah**

Your community building success may mean that a polluter ceases activities or changes technology or that a community of former drug and alcohol abusers and friends creates a foundation to help others find their way to a clean and sober life. Your actions can contribute to unique solutions to homelessness for low-income working poor. Maybe you can play a role in building a park or changing city policy. Successful organizing might mean that you help seniors in your neighborhood to live in their own homes longer by developing “aging in place” resources. Maybe you help create a neighborhood watch for safety, or you gather support to ensure more frequent buses visit local areas. It’s true, you can achieve pretty much anything you want. Make sure that it’s right for you and your community. It’s really up to you.

### **The Challenge**

There are many challenges before us. Right now our environment is in great difficulty, our power grid is old and degrading, schools seem antiquated and often lack funding, our transportation system needs major upgrades and prisons are overcrowded. There’s a lot of things not right in river city. It’s also true that people live with an incredible abundance, a fact which viewed from other cultures is almost beyond belief. People in developing societies want our wealth and the abundance we generate. They look to us for models of successful community activism. Whether we take action or not is something that you and I will have to live with the remainder of our short lives.

Effective community building requires a common bond and one of the best bonds is a set of shared values. For example, an ashram in India includes a group with shared values of practice and meditation. They may live and eat together. A neighborhood association in British Columbia might share a concern for safety from bears who've lost habitat and venture into residential areas looking for food.

A community with shared values has more leverage to make significant change, than does a single individual. It doesn't have to be a big group. Cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does."

When engineer Don Schoendorfer saw a beggar in Morocco dragging herself across a road, it was an image that deeply bothered him. Schoendorfer started tinkering in his Santa Ana garage and built a wheel chair out of a lawn chair. He realized that the perfect wheelchair for poor people would be a vehicle that is light, durable and cheap. He kept improving and modifying the chair. The dream began small, then a few people helped and soon the cheap wheelchairs became the Free Wheelchair Mission, a faith-based nonprofit headquartered in Irvine. Since 2001, it has given away nearly 500,000 wheelchairs in 77 developing nations.

The manufacturing center long ago moved from Schoendorfer's garage to two factories in China where the wheelchair components are produced at a cost of about \$60 each. The organization has grown from a volunteer effort to a nonprofit with a staff of 18 and a \$6.5-million budget. The chairs have been shipped to India, Peru and post- earthquake Haiti, among other countries.

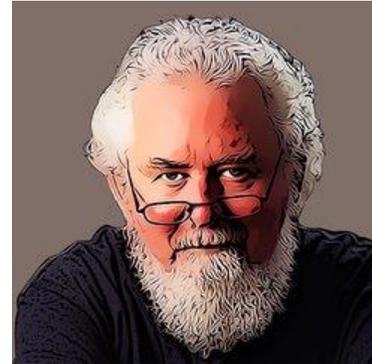
Where do you think we're heading? What we do with what we have is something that our kids and grandkids will ask about somewhere down the line. Neighbors too. We can be more than who we think we are, our communities respond when we go for the gold and shoot for the stars. Leave your farm and neighborhood in a better place, one that fulfills your dreams and of your community.

If you know how to recruit and increase membership in your church or service club, do you act upon your knowledge? If you want to have input about how tall new buildings are on your street or a plan for a new neighborhood park, how do you voice your concerns? When you talk with your neighbors who complain about local streets, what do you say? Maybe you could say "Would you agree to help organize a neighborhood group to engage with the City's planning bureau or help



start a group?" The future is in your hands. Get involved. In this information-laden age, we don't have the luxury to say that we didn't know.

Every effort that you contribute to thinking, communicating and acting better, can have far-reaching consequences. Believe it. Our world needs the best and the brightest. It needs you and me as effective Community Builders. Our communities need us to stand up and take a leap. There's so much at stake. Futurist Dudley Lynch's recent book, *LEAP! How to Think Like a Dolphin & Do the Next Right, Smart Thing Come Hell or High Water*<sup>1</sup> states: "We are capable of getting better, improving, maturing, and for all our setbacks and fall-shorts, we *are* getting better." To this end, Dudley relates certain qualities that make for a successful leap then says, "to be good at leap management, you need to have a clear, insightful understanding of what goes on from start to finish when the leap is unfolding."



**Dudley Lynch**  
**Futurist, Trainer & Career**  
**Thinkologist**  
[www.BrainTechnologies.com](http://www.BrainTechnologies.com)

Whether we proceed with intention and manage our leaps or we allow ourselves to be "blowin' in the wind," we live at a time when humankind is changing at a dynamic rate previously unknown in the history of our species.

How can you and I make the *leap* to effect change? Jane Goodall observed that "Change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the people who are doing something you don't believe is right." The truth is that each one of us can change things individually. Together, in community, whether it's our family, neighborhood or city, we can make monumental changes. She says, "Only if we understand, will we care. Only if we care, will we help. Only if we help shall all be saved."

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make. The greatest danger to our future is apathy." Creating community requires conscious relationship building. This is a key concept. Relationship building involves



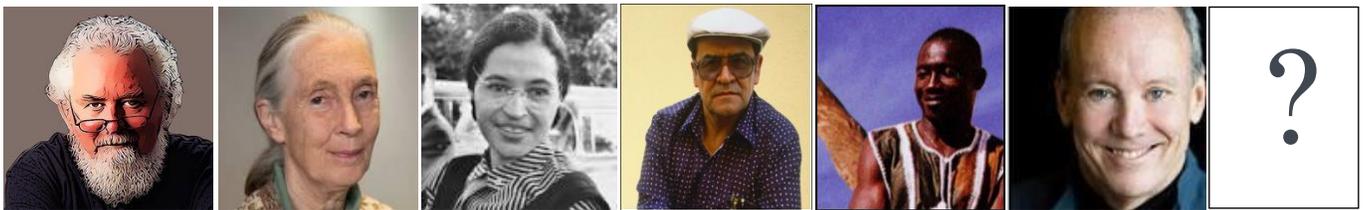
Jane Goodall  
Primatologist

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values like integrity, willingness to communicate, response-ability, compromise and the willingness to take risks. Lasting change is a series of compromises. And compromise is all right, as long as your values are well-chosen and don't change.

### Benefits

Community has built civilization. A strong community is resilient. It's diverse. It's responsive to those who assume response-ability for getting things done. It's what you want life to be and how you'd like everyone else to act. It takes being respectful towards all involved. It takes time and the benefits of your time investment are incredible. No name calling, violence or bullying. Regular predetermined actions combine to bring resolution to thorny disagreements and seemingly-impossible situations. Having a good cross-section of stakeholders involved will help create an empowered community. Everyone wins.



**These notable Community Builders are inspirations and global citizens of the highest order: Dudley Lynch, Jane Goodall, Rosa Parks, Jamie Escalante, Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah and William McDonough. Who are your community builder heroes?**

So there you have the ideas, beginnings and bearings for 52 weeks of Community Builder downloads. We'll consider many different aspects required of successful community building and strengthening. Modules will cover a topic or theme and offer personal skill building strategies, processes for individuals integrating with community and a discussion of unique communities or initiatives appropriate to the topic.

Topics will include such areas as catalytic leadership, friendraising, abundance, starting a group or a nonprofit, volunteer considerations and a host of themed topics like shelter, water, food, farming, homelessness, the environment and international programs. You'll learn about unique strategies, new ideas and successful interventions. I invite you to join in learning and sharing the interests and issues you are passionate about. While I share my experiences and learnings and those of affiliates and colleagues, I hope that you'll find useful ideas, tools and strategies to adapt and use to make a difference in your life, your neighborhood and village, town or city.

You and I have the great privilege and honor of studying and working together to prepare for the world of our dreams. If we are involved--we will be an active part

of that change. If we are part of that change, we will be part of creating a magnificent and incredible reality. It will be a world we love, one that provides a better life for ourselves, our communities and our world.

Architect William McDonough was lauded by Time magazine in 1999 as a Hero for the Planet. He doesn't limit his focus to design but integrates it with human intention. When lecturing about Cradle to Cradle design, he outlined a brief history of the definition of human rights in the United States, from the rights of white landowners in Thomas Jefferson's time to emancipation, women's suffrage, and civil rights. He pointed out that the country first recognized the rights of nature with the Endangered Species Act in 1973.



William McDonough  
Architect, Designer

"The idea of the rights of nature is fundamental to our human experience and what our human experience is about to be," he said. Then he asks what recognizing the rights of nature means for designers? "The first question we ask in our design is, how do we love all of the children of all the species for all time?" he said, then answered the question with his firm's mission statement: "Our goal is a safe, healthy and just world, with clean air, water, soil and power; economically, ecologically and elegantly enjoyed."

Think about that first design question... **how do we love all of the children of all the species for all time?** That's an amazing statement and an honorable dream. What an incredible perspective from start to finish. Long range thinking. What's your long-term vision?

The sky's the limit, Community Builders. Let's engineer the changes we want to see and create a new reality, together. I ask you to share this introduction with your colleagues and friends, anyone who might benefit. The more diverse group we bring together the more we'll learn. We'll consider questions specific to your passion for moving your community, your group and your nonprofit, whatever size and focus forward. We have multiple affiliates who are experts in a variety of areas, have a variety of tools and are an inspiration. Let's take this leap...together!

Please share your ideas with me at any time via email at [info@nwresources.com](mailto:info@nwresources.com) or on the blog and we'll explore suggestions, share learning and questions from your group or from our own new community, the one we build with Community Builder. I can make no guarantees about what you gain from the Modules or any of the other resources contained at this web site or any other information found in your exploration through NW Resources, I hope it will

help you. It is filled with good, solid information that would be useful to a serious community builder and activist.

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Michael S. Roth



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**"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.  
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself." —Rumi**

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