

Resilient Communities: The Strength of Neighbors in Challenging Times

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September 2025

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY | Extension
Southwind District



When life's challenges hit, whether it's a sudden storm, an economic downturn, or a personal crisis, it is often our neighbors who step in first. Communities that thrive are not the ones without challenges, but the ones where people know how to come together, share resources, and lean on one another.

One of my favorite resources in the community vitality field is *13 Ways to Kill Your Community* by Doug Griffiths. The book ties in perfectly here, as many of the "don'ts" he outlines demonstrate how quickly resilience can erode when people stop investing in one another. Griffiths reminds us that communities often weaken not because of external pressures, but because of internal choices: apathy, disconnection, or a lack of support. The opposite is also true: communities thrive when people choose to engage, invest, and care. True resilience is built when neighbors prioritize connection over isolation and cooperation over competition.

Resilience isn't just about bouncing back after hard times; it's about bouncing forward. Each challenge provides an opportunity for communities to adapt, learn, and grow stronger.

We've seen examples of this in action right here at home. When severe weather leaves families without power, neighbors check in on one another, offering meals, generators, or even a warm place to stay. During tough economic times, communities rally behind local businesses, hosting shop-local campaigns and finding creative ways to keep doors open. And when personal hardships strike, it's often the casserole delivered to the doorstep, the shared ride to work, or the donation jar at the local café that makes all the difference.

Building resilient communities doesn't happen by accident. It starts with simple, everyday actions:

- **Know your neighbors.** A quick introduction today can become a lifeline tomorrow. Make sure to take time to introduce yourself and get to know the people who live around you!
- **Share skills and resources.** From tools to talents, what we lend each other builds a safety net. This might just be as simple as organizing a "Skill-Swap Night" to learn who is best at gardening, cooking, or fixing that broken backdoor!
- **Support local organizations and businesses.** This is as simple as it sounds! Make sure to shop at local neighborhood stores or farmers' Markets! Schools, churches, nonprofits, and civic groups are often the backbone of coordinated response.
- **Plan ahead together.** Community preparedness events or neighborhood emergency plans ensure everyone is ready when the unexpected happens. Create a neighborhood contact list or emergency plan!

Resilience grows when individuals shift from "me" to "we." Each act of kindness and cooperation creates stronger ties, making it easier to withstand whatever challenges come our way. In the end, resilient communities remind us that while we may not be able to control the storms of life, we can control how we weather them together. A strong community is not built in a day; they are built every day!

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