

What Makes a Community Feel Like Home?

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September 2026

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Southwind District

There's something about fall that makes us want to get out and about. The leaves begin to change, the temperatures finally start to cool down, and after a long, hot summer, it feels good to spend a little more time outside. Friday night football games, fall festivals, community events, school activities, and local gatherings begin filling our calendars again. As we get out and about, we often run into the people who make our communities feel like home.



When we think about what makes a community a great place to live, we often think about the things we can see: good schools, parks, businesses, community events, beautiful buildings, and well-maintained streets. Those things certainly matter, but when people talk about what makes a place *feel* like home, the answer often has more to do with people than places. Places don't create community, People do. A community becomes special when people know one another, look out for one another, and feel like they belong.

Fall gives us plenty of opportunities to build those connections. It might happen while you're sitting in the bleachers at a football game and strike up a conversation with someone you don't know. Maybe it's visiting a local business during a community event, volunteering at a fall festival, helping with a school activity, or simply stopping to talk with a neighbor while you're both enjoying the cooler weather. These moments may seem small, but they add up. Community development isn't always about launching the next big project or finding the perfect solution to a community challenge. Sometimes, it's about strengthening the connections that already exist and creating opportunities for new ones.

Think about your own community. Who are the people who make it feel like home? Maybe it's the teacher who knows every child's name. The coach who gives up their evenings. The person who organizes the town festival every year. The neighbor who always has an extra plate of cookies. The volunteer who is the first to arrive and the last to leave, or maybe it's simply the person who waves. We don't always recognize the impact these people have because what they are doing doesn't necessarily make the news. But they are creating something important: a sense of belonging, and belonging matters. When people feel connected to where they live, they are more likely to get involved, support local businesses and organizations, volunteer, participate in community activities and invest their time and energy into making their community better. The best part is that we don't have to wait for someone else to create that feeling.

So this fall, get out, go to the game, attend the festival, visit the local business, Volunteer, sit beside someone new, or Wave when you drive by. You might just be helping create the feeling that makes someone else call your community home. After all, home isn't just a place on a map; it's a feeling, and we all have a role in creating it.

For more information, please contact Community Vitality Agent Amanda Clasen at any Southwind District office or at amclasen@ksu.edu.