

## INTERCHANGE

*\$2.5 million for Social Capital, 4; Money Sense for  
Portrait of an Artist, 28; Taste of the Nation: Cho*

U.S.1

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**O**f the multitude of sayings attributed to Yogi Berra, the one that strikes closest to the heart of social capital is, "If you don't go to somebody's funeral they won't come to yours."

For Nancy Kieling, executive director of the Princeton Area Community Foundation, Yogi's quote ideally sums up the point the foundation wants to make — that building a better world starts with building better communities and better selves. And to help illustrate its point, PACF and the Princeton Chamber recently introduced the results of central New Jersey's first "Social Capital Benchmark Survey."

Social capital, a concept born of Harvard public policy professor Robert Putnam, refers to the relationships that tie people together. According to the PACF, a growing body of research shows that communities with higher levels of good working and social relationships experience better education, offer more stability and less crime, and build better local government and economies.

Commissioned in 2007, the joint chamber and foundation study, conducted by Marc Weiner of Rutgers' Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, culled responses from 870 residents and business people in 19 central New Jersey municipalities. Kieling says the survey was



launched, in part, to give measurable data to the idea that social capital's underlying concept of "paying it forward" actually builds better communities. It works, she says, when individuals do something as simple as say hello to a stranger on the street and when major companies take a moment to be better corporate citizens.

**Good working and social relationships build better communities and economies. Little things count.**

Born and raised in Princeton, Kieling says her values were instilled at the breakfast and dinner table, where she always ate with mom, an administrative assistant, and dad, a math teacher. Though she studied history and German at the University of Wisconsin in Madison (Class of 1971), Kieling has had a diverse career path, moving from university admissions to corporate banking to

PACF, where she started 14 years ago. It is here, she says, that she has finally found her ideal place in the world.

Kicling says the survey shows people in general agree that a better community starts small. The survey highlights 41 ways individuals and 10 ways businesses can contribute to social capital. The answers are the foundation of the "Better Together" initiative, which will include \$2.5 million in grants over a five-year period to encourage businesses and residents to be more aware of social capital and its implications.

"Much of social capital is intuitive," she says. "I would be really please if the community would stop and think about these issues. I think this is something that's been hiding in plain sight." More information regarding Better Together is available at online at [www.pacf.org](http://www.pacf.org) and [www.princetonchamberfoundation.org](http://www.princetonchamberfoundation.org).

**H**erewith 41 steps for individuals who want to improve their social capital.

- 1.) Organize a social gathering to welcome a new neighbor.
- 2.) Register to vote — and vote every time.
- 3.) Support your local merchants.
- 4.) Start a community garden.
- 5.) Help fix someone's flat tire.
- 6.) Join the local Elks, Kiwanis, or Knights of Columbus.
- 7.) Sing in a choir.
- 8.) Attend Memorial Day parades and Fourth of July fireworks.
- 9.) Form a tool lending library with neighbors and share ladders and snow blowers.
- 10.) Eat breakfast at a local gathering spot on Saturdays (and mingle!).
- 11.) Join the volunteer fire department.
- 12.) Stand at a major intersection

## Building Social Capital In the Workplace

- 1.) Encourage groups to hold meetings at your site.
- 2.) Invite local government officials to speak at your workplace.
- 3.) Give employees time (say 3 days per year) to work on civic projects.
- 4.) Offer a group of your employees to clean up a local park or cemetery.
- 5.) Start a lunch gathering or a discussion group with co-workers.
- 6.) Go with colleagues to a ball game (and root, root, root for the home team!).
- 7.) Help scrape an icy windshield, or jump-start a co-worker's car.
- 8.) Organize a fitness/health group with your colleagues.
- 9.) Create a team to help with a home building or renovation project.
- 10.) Mentor a young co-worker.

holding a sign for your favorite candidate.

13.) Persuade a local restaurant to have a designated "meet people" table.

14.) Say "thanks" to public servants — police, firefighters, town clerks, teachers.

15.) Plant tree seedlings along your street with neighbors and rotate care for them.

16.) Talk with those you see every day on your commuter train.

17.) Carpool to the station with them.

18.) Enroll in a class and get to know your classmates.

19.) Say hello to strangers.

20.) Log off and go to the park.

21.) Say hello when you spot an acquaintance in a store.

22.) Exercise together or take walks with friends or family.

23.) Collect oral histories from older town residents.

24.) Join a book club.

25.) Tell friends and family what social capital is and why it matters!

26.) Read the local news faithfully.

27.) Fix it even if you didn't break it.

28.) Pick it up even if you didn't drop it.

29.) Attend a public meeting.

30.) Hire young people for odd jobs.

31.) Sit on your stoop and greet passers-by.

32.) Be nice when you're behind the wheel.

33.) Join or start a mall-walking group and have coffee together afterwards.

34.) Become a story-reader or baby rocker at a childcare center or neighborhood pre-school.

35.) Open the door for someone who has his or her hands full.

36.) Offer to watch your neighbor's home or apartment while they are away.

37.) See if your neighbor needs anything when you run to the store.

38.) Join groups (such as arts, sports, or religion) likely to lead to making new friends that bridge across race/ethnicity, or social class.

39.) Walk your dog in a different neighborhood or park.

40.) Tutor someone.

41.) Read bulletin boards and try something new.