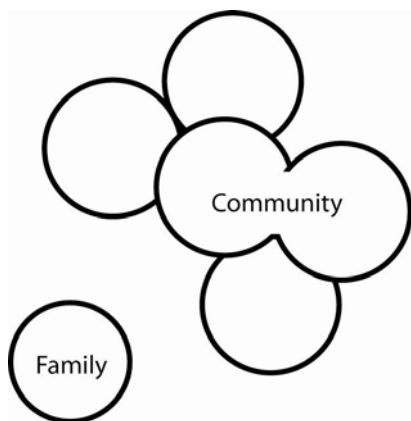


NeighborKeepers is a non-profit, anti-poverty organization that works in collaboration with Mercy Connections and Champlain College in Burlington.

NeighborKeepers has adopted the “Circles of Support” (CoS) national program. Circles of Support is designed to transition families out of poverty through the support of volunteer “allies.”

“It works because it breaks the isolation of poverty” says founder Hal Colston. “The average community member in poverty has zero to two associational relationships in their life; middle-class allies have eight to ten.”



Allies are trained and supported to assist community members with networking and developing resources such as:

- financial literacy
- education and training
- social and community connections
- understand poverty and to
- utilize their own networking resources to help families succeed in a supportive environment.

as well as the ability to build positive, reciprocal relationships, paving the way for a brighter future for themselves, their children, and the community.

NeighborKeepers and Mercy Connections staff provide structured training and support.

All volunteers are asked to make at least a one-year commitment. Generally it takes 18 months to build a meaningful relationship.

Circles of Support (CoS) History

Circles of Support is a high-impact strategy built on community support to transition families out of poverty.

The basic idea has been around for a while. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., saw it as he sat in his cell in the Birmingham jail seeking the strength to challenge the system of segregation.

“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,” he recognized then, *“tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”*

With this basic idea, Circles of Support began in Iowa as a community development initiative committed to the empowerment and economic success of people marginalized by poverty. The program engages the greater community to

To volunteer contact Karin Brenin at 846-7294 or karin@neighborkeepers.org

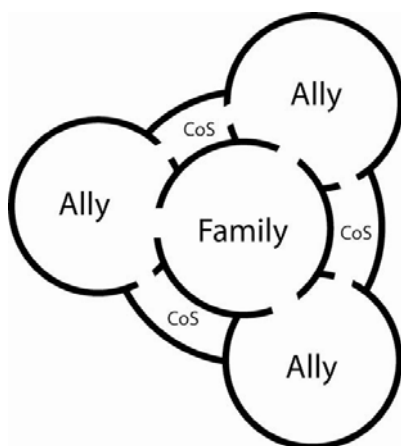
NeighborKeepers History

Social Entrepreneur, Hal Colston, who developed the Good News Garage in 1996, initiated NeighborKeepers as a way to further assist families in need. The NeighborKeepers mission is to engage the community to serve and support families in need of the resources that allow for transformational change to break the bonds of poverty.

How CoS Works

Each circle consists of a low-income family that has resolved to get out of poverty and a team of friends and allies, volunteers recruited from the community, who wrap around the family and offer their support and guidance.

Each family is befriended by a minimum of three allies who commit to be in a relationship based on trust and reciprocity. Allies spend on average six to eight hours per month in relationship with the families.



Community members join Circles of Support making a commitment to the following:

- Willingness to participate
- Openness to accept support for personal dreams and goals
- Interest in learning to advocate for themselves and become leaders

Community members are often recruited through their involvement in various social service agencies, self-sufficiency programs, and educational centers. Once identified, the community members will attend an orientation at which they are introduced to Circles of Support and its basic principles.

Once accepted into the program, community members must attend at least two meetings per month and meet with their allies in a monthly Circles of Support meeting to review progress for achieving goals.

***Make a difference,
become an ally.***

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