

Community Building

As a settlement house, QCH's mission is not only to provide services, but also to strengthen the communities that we serve. In addition to carrying out specific program tasks, each staff member is expected to perform his/her job with an awareness of the inter-connectedness between individuals, families, and the community as a whole. This is referred to as a *community building* perspective, and it underlies and guides the way our staff approach their activities. In other words, what matters is not only *what* we do, but also *how* we do it.



Specifically, an employee with a community-building attitude seeks opportunities to:



- advance local leadership (*everyone has something to offer*);
- promote resident participation in programs and civic affairs (*people are more than their problems*);
- build social networks (*neighbors helping neighbors*);
- develop common ground across different neighborhood constituencies (*building understanding across culture, race, religion and age*);
- strengthen the neighborhood's institutional infrastructure (*collaboration*); and
- connect neighborhood interests to external resources and decision makers (*advocacy*).

A community-building approach recognizes that without a strong community, individual empowerment is difficult if not impossible. For this reason, community-building is also about helping to build relationships between our neighbors and to increase their awareness of the 'mutual responsibility' that unites them. If community-building efforts are successful, it will not be because greater services are available to people, but rather that their capacity to collectively address and resolve their problems has been strengthened.



Many of the activities we are engaged in apply aspects of community-building in the way they are conceived, designed and carried out. We are interested in identifying these aspects — and the attitude, values and perspective behind them — so that we can maximize them and give a stronger, clearer direction to our work.