

## **Getting Started: First Steps to Reaching Out Into Your Local Community**

**Each of opportunities is designed to help your church get started in the “relationship building business” of connecting with your local community. They are not “ends in themselves” but are the start to relationships that can lead to deeper opportunities for ministry with your neighbors.**

1. Take rolls of quarters and coffee/doughnuts to the laundymat and offer them to folks coming in on a particular day of the week. As relationships develop with the owner and the patrons, this might be a great off-site location for a Bible Study.
2. Hot dog cookout in a local park or sports field during sports season. This can also turn into a regular opportunity to meet folks and build relationships. What about a short devotional time with hot dogs?
3. Once each month, take a plate of cookies or brownies to the local fire or police department. Ask for their prayer requests. Then follow up!
4. Contact local schools about opportunities to volunteer. Middle schools and high schools are often desperately in need of tutors and mentors. As you build relationships with the school, inquire about other needs.
5. Investigate the need for weekend backpacks of food for children in a local elementary school. This could be an opportunity to partner with other churches in your community to meet the need. The Central Texas Conference Center for Mission Support has grants to help you get started and contacts with other churches already doing this ministry who can guide you.
6. Halloween Community Trunk or Treat . . . be sure to share a flier with information about worship opportunities and children’s ministries.
7. Move your church’s Easter egg hunt to the city park and invite the community to participate. Be sure to pass out fliers about Easter services and ongoing children’s ministries.
8. Host a “back-to-school-party” (or a “school’s out party”) on the church parking lot with games and activities and school supplies as prizes. Be sure to share information about fall children’s/youth programming or VBS.
9. Offer Christian financial planning classes such as the Dave Ramsey courses or Faith and Finances by Chalmers Institute. Advertise these particularly to young families and provide child care at no charge.
10. Offer parenting classes in your local community using resources such as “Growing Kids God’s Way.” Use these opportunities to build relationships with young families and invite children and youth to appropriate programming.
11. Prepare a small “back-to-school” gift such as an individual potted flower for teachers in a local school and deliver them during in-service days. Include a note that shares a special Sunday to pray for/dedicate teachers. This is a great way to include children and youth in a service project.
12. Move your VBS to the local park and include plenty of opportunities for parents and children to become involved in ongoing activities.
13. Find out what kinds of non-perishable foods your local food pantry needs seasonally and ask persons to bring one can of a specified food item each month. Bless these items in worship before delivery.
14. Offer training in negotiating unemployment using curriculum such as Chalmers Institute’s Jobs for Life. This also provides opportunities for mentoring and relationship building.