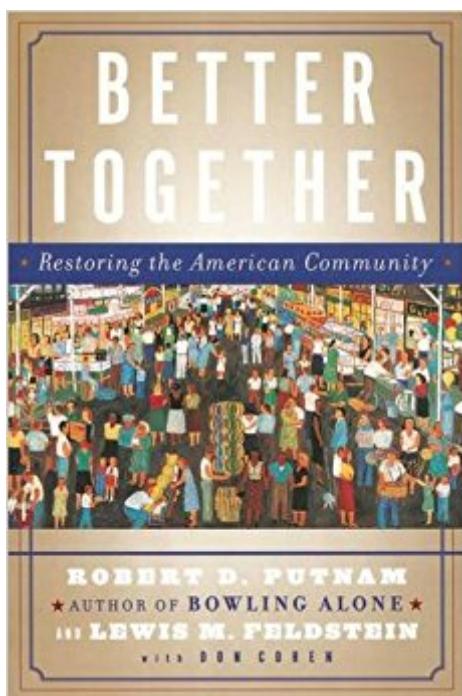


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# Better Together: Restoring The American Community



## Synopsis

In his acclaimed *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam describes the United States as a nation in which we have become increasingly disconnected from one another and in which our social structures have disintegrated. But in the final chapter of that book he detects hopeful signs of civic renewal. In *Better Together* Putnam and coauthor Lewis Feldstein tell the inspiring stories of people who are reweaving the social fabric by bringing their own communities together or building bridges to others. *Better Together* examines how people across the country are inventing new forms of social activism and community renewal. An arts program in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, brings together shipyard workers and their gentrified neighbors; a deteriorating, crime-ridden neighborhood in Boston is transformed by a determined group of civic organizers; an online "virtual" community in San Francisco allows its members to connect with each other as well as the larger group; in Wisconsin schoolchildren learn how to participate in the political process to benefit their town. As our society grows increasingly diverse, say Putnam and Feldstein, it's more important than ever to grow "social capital," whether by traditional or more innovative means. The people profiled in *Better Together* are doing just that, and their stories illustrate the extraordinary power of social networks for enabling people to improve their lives and the lives of those around them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Putnam's much praised *Bowling Alone* put the concept of social capital (social networking) into broad currency by remarking on its growing absence. Now the Harvard prof and fellow public policy expert Feldstein approach the issue from the opposite direction: without suggesting

communitarianism is sweeping the nation, they offer a dozen case studies of what groups of varying size have accomplished by cultivating networks of mutual assistance. Examples range from a neighborhood subdivision in Boston to an entire Mississippi county as well as the "virtual community" of Craigslist, an online bulletin board that has become the prime "go-to" source for job and apartment listings in San Francisco and elsewhere. The authors stress the importance of participatory involvement, championing networks that create opportunities for people to find their own public voice rather than relying on organizers to speak for them. Thus, one chapter recounts a New Hampshire public arts project in which townspeople's stories created the structure of an interpretive dance about a local shipyard's history; another chapter has schoolchildren in Wisconsin writing to local and state leaders to propose public improvements. Though each group is, as one person puts it, "recreating our neighborhood into the kind of village we want it to be," the book emphasizes no particular approach, juxtaposing the work of local governments with neighborhood associations and churchgoers with union organizers. The overarching argument, supported anecdotally rather than statistically, is tentative-something's going on but it's too early to tell how big it might become-but Putnam's reputation will guarantee the book a hearing. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Putnam, Harvard professor of public policy, ended his highly acclaimed *Bowling Alone* (2000) with hints that renewed social activism would soon counteract social alienation in America. In this follow-up, he and his coauthors examine the hopeful signs of reconnection in a variety of organizations, activities, and places demonstrating concerted efforts at reawakening ties between communities and individuals. The authors highlight case studies of building and applying social capital, defined as social networks and mutual assistance. The case studies, based on strong success, longevity, impact, scope, and established reputation, include the rejuvenation of branch libraries in Chicago; an interfaith effort to improve schools in a small Texas town; an arts project recalling the history of a New Hampshire shipyard; and an economic development project in Tupelo, Mississippi. These are not all feel-good stories--some highlight conflict and controversy--but each offers a compelling story of individuals and communities establishing bonds of trust. Readers who enjoyed *Bowling Alone* will appreciate this inspiring follow-up. Vanessa Bush Copyright Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A few chapters are interesting, but they get repetitive.

Anyone who is concerned about the path our country is on should read this book. It proves that grass-roots leadership is alive and well in America today!!!

Putnam's work is always informative and inspirational.

Thank You.

Stories of good things which happen, but don't generally make the "news". People like gore.

perfect, exactly as stated

Absolutely inspiring. Breaks away from theory and focuses on real life examples of how people are saving and strengthening their communities all over the US.

This book has been invaluable to me in my research into the growing phenomenon of social isolation many Americans are experiencing. I've noticed this for years and am glad to read that some experts agree. The book was delivered very quickly and in excellent shape. I'm referring to it in my college studies.

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