

A Workshop for WestCo 2001 - Eugene, Oregon  
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NASCO, the North American Students of Cooperation, is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to strengthening and expanding the cooperative movement on college campuses across the United States and Canada.

NASCO was founded in the spring of 1968 by a group of student co-op leaders and supporters who wanted to create a common voice for cooperatives in campus communities. NASCO was conceived to help educate new generations of co-op members about the principles and practices of cooperation, to forge alliances between existing co-ops, and to act as an advocate of the movement.

Since its inception, NASCO has provided comprehensive programs and services aimed at building the campus cooperative movement. Those programs and services include an annual conference, a career development program, educational publications, development services for groups who wish to start new co-ops, and more.

All of NASCO's programs are ultimately aimed at developing the potential of students co-ops to provide affordable services and to encourage cooperative leadership. By strengthening the campus co-op movement, we can strengthen the future of all cooperatives.

[www.umich.edu/~nasco](http://www.umich.edu/~nasco)

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# Statement of Co-operative Identity

*Adopted in September 1995 by the International Co-operative Alliance*

## Definition

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

## Values

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

## Principles

The cooperative principles are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice.

***Volunteer and Open Membership:*** Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all person able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibility of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

***Democratic Member Control:*** Cooperatives are democratic controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

***Member Economic Participation:*** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible, benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative, and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

***Autonomy and Independence:*** Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

***Education, Training, and Information:*** Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

***Cooperation among Cooperatives:*** Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

***Concern for Community:*** While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

## Campus Co-operatives - A Brief History

- 1844-1849:** The Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers was founded and codified the Cooperative Principles.
- 1882:** The Harvard Cooperative Society, North America's first student cooperative, was formed. The co-op originally sold textbooks and firewood; it is now a "collegiate department store."
- 1883-1932:** More co-op bookstores began. On a few campuses, students experimented with dining co-ops and housing co-ops. Cayahuga Lodge, one of the early housing co-ops, was begun at Cornell in 1922.
- 1932-1940:** The Depression. Co-ops began popping up all over both countries as a way for students to survive on as little as possible. Most student co-ops formed local associations at this time.
- 1940-1950:** Student co-ops started buying their houses and legally incorporating. Although a few houses had owned their property before this time, often due to a donation, co-ops did not start expanding in earnest until this period. In 1946, NASCO's predecessor, the North American Student Cooperative League, was formed to unite student co-ops and their supporters.
- 1950-1966:** Some co-ops continued to expand; many did nothing or concentrated on improving their operating systems. A few co-op systems died, usually due to the intervention of the university. In 1956, NASCL ceased to exist, a victim of lack of funds, too loose an organization, and the general malaise of the period. One major co-op system, the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association, began during this period.
- 1966-1972:** New co-ops started up, due to interest in alternative systems generated during the 1960s, and the sudden availability of Federal funds for building student co-ops. Most student co-ops went co-ed. NASCO was begun in 1968 by a group of student co-op activists who wanted once more to join together supporters and members of student co-ops.
- 1972-1985:** Co-ops acted much as they had during the 1950s and 1960s. Groups that had formed during the late 1960s expanded during this period. NASCO held regional and national conferences which turned into the Institute, the annual meeting of student co-op activists.
- 1986-Today** Co-ops once again became interested in expanding. Three major groups added several additional buildings. Four student co-ops established the Campus Cooperative Development Corporation as a vehicle for developing new student co-ops. NASCO sponsors the creation of NASCO Properties, a national organization which purchases buildings to start new student co-ops.



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# NASCO Member Services

## ***Cooperative Education and Training Institute***

***November 2nd - 4th, 2001***

The Institute is widely recognized as one of the most important training opportunities available to co-op members, directors, staff and managers. Held each fall in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Institute attracts hundreds of cooperators from the US and Canada for two and one half days of comprehensive technical programs and discussions. Speakers, films, social events and the opportunity to meet with cooperative members and leaders makes the weekend a truly unforgettable experience. Scholarships are available through the NASCO Low Income Scholarship Fund which provides Institute participants with reductions in registration fees as well as travel assistance.

## ***Co-op Voices***

NASCO's Co-op Voices newsletter features reports on activity among campus-based cooperatives in Canada and the United States. It reports on NASCO's activities and provides brief updates of non-campus co-operative news. It provides a unique perspective on campus with articles written by co-op members.

## ***Campus Cooperative Development Corporation (CCDC)***

Special organizing and training resources are made available to student groups interested in starting or expanding cooperatives. Working with the Campus Cooperative Development Corporation (CCDC), NASCO provides an array of development services including assistance in pre-development activities, financial assistance, and start-up assistance.

## ***NASCO Properties (NP)***

This organization provides an ownership structure and management assistance to housing cooperatives across the US, including: Chicago, IL; Athens, OH; Santa Cruz, CA; and Austin, TX.

## ***Member Visits***

The NASCO staff visits Active Member groups annually, providing consultation and training on a variety of topics. Workshop topics include meeting process, basic board training, planning, personnel, marketing, and organizational development; workshops can also be developed by special request. The staff also takes time to meet informally with co-op members, officers, directors, and staff to discuss issues facing cooperative and to provide perspectives gained from NASCO's work with campus cooperatives all across North America. Minor on-site consulting includes work and governance systems, financial controls, staff relations, member recruitment, and participation strategies.

## ***Training and Consulting Service***

NASCO works with its members and the general public on a variety of more extensive training and consulting activities. Recent service contracts have included bookkeeping services, board training programs, business plan development, and expansion assistance. NASCO provides significant discounts on these services to its members.

## ***NASCO's Manager & Staff Conference***

NASCO annually sponsors a conference for student co-op managers and staff. These conference focuses on professional development and networking. Outside speakers and special sessions are scheduled.

## ***Co-operative Internship Program***

The Cooperative Internship Network places talented student cooperators in jobs with cooperatives and cooperative organizations. Each spring, the Network seeks to bring together student applicants with Internship sponsors for summer employment in a wide range of cooperatives and cooperative organizations. Past internships have included: a summer internship with a low-income credit union in Appalachia; an internship with the National Co-operative Business Association; and an internship with the member services department of an optical cooperative in Detroit. Most internships are paid and some include room and board as well. NASCO works with internship sponsors to identify qualified applicants, assists in setting up interviews, and provides assistance throughout the hiring process.



## Definitions of Community

“ The essence of the term indicates: a sense of mutuality, togetherness or belonging (identity), sharing, interchange, joint responsibility (especially for self- government).

- a sense of geographic place or of functional boundaries;
- sharing a history and a self-identity;
- realization of common interests;
- enjoying interdependence and stable interactions among members;
- utilizing institutionalized social arrangements like markets (economy), temples (religion), family (kinship), schools (socialization), welfare (mutual aid), law and police (social control), levels of prestige (social class), and patterns of citizen behavior (participation);
- engaging in stable social interactions according to shared expectations and ongoing commitments to specific norms, values, attitudes, aspirations, world-views, traditions, or patterns of culture;
- showing a willingness to use recognized ways of settling conflicts which arise among members of the community."

## An Intentional Community...

“a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display an amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological.”



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# Ways to Create Community in Co-ops

- Create Organizational Publications
- Create a Co-op Photo Album or Scrap Book
- October is Co-op Month! (Plan contests, co-op pride days, and celebrations!)
- Start House and Board meetings with interactive co-op games and icebreakers!
- Make a video about your co-op
- Capture your Co-op History in Creative Ways (Quilts, Tile Projects, Murals, Banners)
- Invite alums over dinner and to talk about the good ole' days
- Create Co-op Culture (hang up co-op posters and pictures; subscribe to co-op magazines and newsletters, support and patronize local cooperatives)
- Host co-op gatherings, like NASCO's WEST-CO, a mini-Institute designed as an opportunity for co-ops on the West Coast to get together for a few days of fun and learning.
- Send members to West-Co when it is being held other co-ops (A road trip to another co-op can create a unique bond among co-op members.)



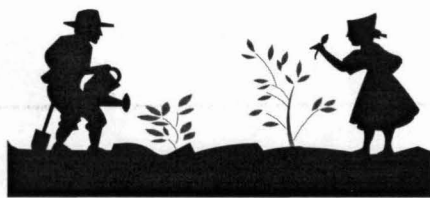
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# Developing Community

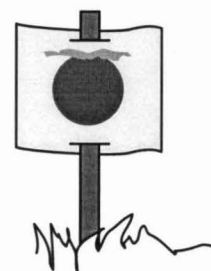


Developing a sense of community in campus cooperatives is crucial to the successful operations of a cooperative. Organizations in which the members know each other well and have working relationships are better able to complete the day-to-day work of the co-op with more enjoyment and less conflict. What follows are some suggestions for building a sense of community in co-ops:

## Co-op Wide

While interacting with people outside the co-op can help develop a sense of community and build support for co-ops in the neighborhood/region, many people are attracted to co-ops because of the inherent community building aspects of cooperative organization. People living, working, and eating together generally build strong bonds together. Here are some methods to enhance that process:

**Newsletter:** Most multi-site co-ops produce a newsletter on a regular basis. Besides being a good source for information on committee meetings, board decisions, and upcoming events, newsletters can also be a forum for presenting new ideas to members, to publish artwork, stories or poetry by members, or to provide amusement and fun to members.



As an outreach mechanism, newsletters can be used to spread the word to alumni, prospective members, and individuals who are interested in, or need to be persuaded to respect, co-ops. Co-op newsletters often include sections for special announcements, sometimes called "pine cones" because a symbol of cooperatives is the twin pines logo, in which members offer special thanks or comments for general consumption. Consider sending copies of your co-op's newsletter to other co-ops (NASCO can provide you with the address labels.)

**Progressive Dinners:** The UT-ICC co-ops have established a tradition of holding progressive dinners a couple of times a year. Members spend an evening visiting several co-op houses in the co-op system. Appetizers are eaten at one co-op, soup and salad at another, a main course at a third house, etc. During a progressive dinner, co-op members meet folks from other houses, make friends and taste the best food each co-op can come up with, and end up knowing a lot more about the co-op, the people who live there, and who can make the best food.

**Brunch or Meal Exchanges:** Some co-op houses host other co-ops for brunch or other meals. The Chicago co-ops hold regular Friday night banquets which rotate among the two co-op houses, a co-op apartment building, and a large apartment where several co-op alumni live.

**New Member Orientation:** Your co-ops member orientation is a great place to begin developing co-op spirit. A good orientation is a blend of business - where to pay charges, how to deal with conflict, how to bring an issue to the board - and fun activities like role playing, games, food, etc. Many co-ops in an attempt to increase attendance at orientations, now require co-op members to attend (and fine them if they don't). Before resorting to these requirements, perhaps co-ops should instead try to develop an orientation that people will *want* to come to.

**Annual Meeting:** Co-ops in general strive to make their annual meetings a good mixture of business and fun. Maybe between officer and staff reports the co-op can squeeze in fun activities like a co-op "family feud" game, door prizes, performances, etc. It's a good idea to include food at the meeting (maybe even cancel all house dinners that night) and to wrap it up with a co-op wide party.

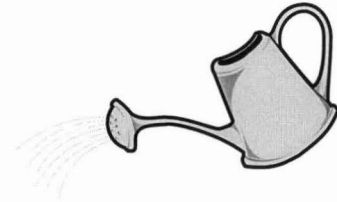
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**Summer Education Program:** ICC Ann Arbor has an extensive summer education program. The co-op invites a cooperator from another part of the world as their guest for the summer to present their ideas about cooperation and how co-ops work in other countries. Summer interns hired through NASCO's internship network participate and help develop programs. Co-op members undertake field trips to other co-op businesses in the region.

**Alternative Spring Break:** Coordinate an alternative spring break program in which your co-op sends some members to stay in another co-op or community and volunteer for local community organizations for a week or so.

## House Level

**Cooperative Games:** A cooperative game allows everyone to join in and there are no winners and no losers. *The Cooperative Sports and Games Book* and *The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book*, both by Terry Orlick are great resources.



Examples of co-op games include:

- **Parachute Games:** An old parachute can be the beginning of lots of co-op games for member orientations and other informal gatherings. Everyone (10-20 people) grabs the edge of the parachute, and makes a big circle with the chute in the middle. At this point, you can bounce stuff around on it, run across or under it, billow it up and sit underneath in a kind of mushroom cave, etc.
- **Ball Tosses:** These can be great ways to get to know people in a group. Standing in a circle, people toss balls, teddy bears, and other throwables. When you catch the ball, you have to say your name and the name of the people you caught from and throw to. Try to get several balls going around at once.
- **Human Knot:** A small group of people all huddle in a bunch. Every one reaches out and grabs one hand from one person and another hand from someone else. Try to untangle the knot into a circle of people holding hands, *without letting go of anyone*.

**Special Labor Positions:** In addition to cooking dinner, cleaning bathrooms, maintaining the building and others, many co-ops provide house labor credit for jobs that directly contribute to improving the community of the co-op. Examples of these include:

- Bread makers
- Education coordinators
- Social events coordinators
- Gardeners
- Humus, pesto, or salsa makers
- Dessert cooks
- Community representative - planned community wide events
- Vibes Watchers - during intense house meetings

**Work Holiday:** The best way to build a sense of community, sense of ownership, and pride in your cooperative is through all co-op members working as a group to solve some problem or improve the house in some way. The most common example of this is the work holiday. This is a time - generally a weekend - when everyone in the co-op works together to do spring cleaning, to paint the house, to do minor maintenance, and so forth. Afterward, the co-op generally buys food or beer or has a small party for house members only. Members generally take much more pride in the co-op (and much better care of it) after they've invested some "sweat equity." Here are some do's and don'ts about work holidays:

### **Do**

- Start out the morning with donuts, bagels, juice and coffee for everyone.
- Plan the activities to be undertaken at house meetings before the holiday.

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- Find tasks for each member that they will be interested in doing
  - The whole thing together. Nothing defeats the benefits of a work holiday more than having people working all by themselves. If people have to make up work holiday labor, try to form a small group of people who can work together for the make up.
  - End the work holiday with low-prep meal, like ordering pizza or subs.

## **Don't**

- Have a big party to celebrate the completion of the work holiday - you'll have to do it all again after the party.
- Leave projects unfinished. If it's too big to accomplish during the holiday, then it should be dealt with through other means.
- Forget that work holidays, in addition to being times to spiffy up the co-op, are the optimum times to instill a sense of member ownership among co-op members.

**Mentorship / Apprentices:** SCO in Athens, Ohio, which operates the 8-member ACME House, developed a mentorship program during which house labor positions for the upcoming term are selected by new and continuing members during the previous term. Current job holders teach the future job holders how things work in the co-op, how to do their jobs, etc. This also provides each new member with a buddy who shows them how things work and helps them become a part of the co-op community.

**Food:** Food is the center of co-op life. Having regular meals, plus special brunches and dinners once in a while, are great community builders. Further, not co-op event is complete without some type of food.

## **In the Broader Community**

**Support other Community Groups:** Many co-op members are active in community organizations. Co-ops often common areas (living rooms, etc.) or other meeting space which can other community groups can use for meetings.

- The Santa Cruz Student Housing Co-ops in California have been active in a homeless garden project. Individuals and groups join the garden project which provides jobs for homeless people planting, tending and harvesting the garden - they purchase many of their fruits and vegetables from this organic garden.
- ICC-Ann Arbor and other co-ops have been active with Habitat for Humanity. Co-op members devote a day or a weekend to working with Habitat to build affordable housing in their community. An added benefit is that co-op members gain skills which can benefit the co-op.
- Madison Community Co-op in Wisconsin and Stone Soup Cooperative in Chicago sometimes donate the proceeds from parties to local charity or community groups. Sometimes the cover charge for a party is a can of food to be donated to the Food Bank.



**Membership Recruitment:** One of the most important things student co-ops do is recruit new members. Many co-op use membership recruitment as an opportunity to reach out to other groups and organizations.

- Qumbya Co-op in Chicago has advertised their co-op on the poster for a student-run film series.
- The ICC-Ann Arbor co-ops in the past have sponsored speakers and symposia on campus.
- Many co-ops set up booths during campus fairs and events.
- If your co-op uses flyering as a method of recruiting members, co-op members working together to design, produce and distribute flyers can help build a strong sense of community among them.

**Co-op Fairs and Bashes:** NASCO and its member co-ops sponsor regional bashes in the spring. These bashes - currently held among the Midwestern, Canadian, West Coast and Austin co-ops - provide an opportunity for co-op members in a certain region to get together for a few days of fun and learning. These

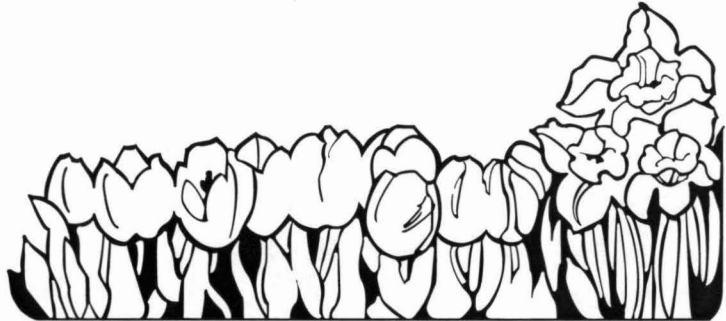
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events are hosted on a quasi-rotational basis among the co-ops in a given region, and are great chances for co-op members to unite to present an exciting program of events. Furthermore, nothing establishes a sense of community like a road trip to another co-op.

The co-ops in Madison, Wisconsin, hold a co-op fair each spring. They host speakers and bands, have booths from all of the (40+) co-ops in town and offer some courses as well.

## Internet

Computer and internet technology provide easy means of communicating beyond the limits of any geographic community, and most students have access to the internet and email.



**Web Pages:** Many co-ops, including many student co-ops, are building an internet presence. They have discovered web pages as a means to keep in touch with co-op alumni, reaching new members, etc.

The more successful pages include:

- Pictures of co-op houses, storefronts, and members
- Information about becoming a member
- History and description of your co-op
- Links to other pages (i.e. other co-ops, NASCO)

Some co-ops are beginning to use their web pages to deliver direct services, including regular updates on vacancies, membership applications, profiles of membership, etc.

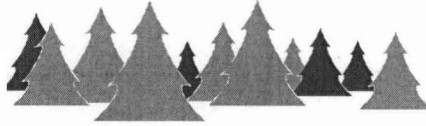
NASCO's web page can be found at: <http://www.umich.edu/~nasco/>. Check out NASCO's links to other co-op organizations and student co-ops. You can send email to NASCO at: <nasco@umich.edu>.



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# **Tips for Building Co-op Spirit**



## **I. Co-op History & the Co-op Movement**

Does your co-op provide its members with opportunities to learn about their cooperative roots? Giving people a tangible history and an idea of the greater co-op movement helps to link them to the social visions of co-ops and co-op activists, past and present. Presentations on co-op history and the movement are good to have at orientations. However, posters on these topics can be made and hung in a common area to remind people and to inform guests and prospective members.

- A. Talk about the history of your co-op – how it got started, changes over the years, etc. Posters with tidbits of your co-op's history often spark conversations about your co-op's past.
- B. Fill people in on the history of the co-op movement. Discuss the Co-op Principles and how they apply to your co-op.
  - 1. Voluntary and Open Membership
  - 2. Democratic Member Control
  - 3. Member Economic Participation
  - 4. Autonomy and Independence
  - 5. Education, Training and Information
  - 6. Co-operation among Cooperatives
  - 7. Concern for Community
- C. Let members know about NASCO, the student cooperative movement, and the co-op movement as a whole. It's empowering to know that you are a part of an international movement, and how you fit in that movement.

## **II. Community Building Exercises**

Building community and unity within your house is something which every member can contribute to. The following are a few ideas of things you can do at house meetings, or other times that help break the ice and work towards team building.

- A. Ice Breakers – many co-ops use these at the beginning of all meetings. Each person says their name (unless everyone knows each other already) and whatever the topic that day is, such as "I'm Margaret and my favorite flavor of ice cream is mocha almond fudge." Topics for ice breakers can be anything. Some other examples are: your favorite pair of underwear, why you wanted to live in a co-op, song that best describes your personality, and on and on and on... .
- B. Expectations – Have a discussion of each members' expectations and how that fits into a collective vision for your co-op. Discussions of expectations can help avoid future conflicts and set a tone for the year.
- C. Co-op Games – There are lots of fun and non-competitive games that help with group cohesiveness. Ask a NASCO staff person for suggestions.
- D. Group Excursions – A house cookout, small in-house party, a trip to the local bowling alley or mini-golf course are all fun ways to get to know your housemates. Also, attending a regional co-op bash (conference) or visiting a near-by student or non-student co-op can prove to be both fun and educational.



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### III. Community-Building Operations

Much over-looked in the education process is the impact of house operations on the education and cooperative inclinations of co-op members. While people may be well-grounded in historical knowledge and may enjoy house-meetings, it is important that members interact in positive ways on a regular basis. These types of interactions help build house cohesiveness and spirit, help the co-op work better, and allow people to feel part of the cooperative vision concretized.

- A. Regular Group Meals - Meals are, in their preparation and enjoyment, some of the most social and affirming activities that a house can engage in. Not only can cooking be fun, but eating meals produced by your friends and house mates is a great way to share in community. The last great thing about meals is that they are very practical. They save each individual member both in cost and in labor.
- B. Regular Group Activities - Having regular house activities such as a happy hour, a story-telling evening, or a video-night on a weekly basis can provide an important opportunity for house members to find relaxation and comfort with the house. It is important that the house not only provide member empowerment through work, but also member relaxation through fun.
- C. Regular Communications - Houses which set the expectations of a high level of communication with their officers and other members avoid much confusion and disharmony. By providing times at every house meeting for officer reports and for member concerns, people have the opportunity to speak. Thus, if someone has something to say, they do not have to create the opportunity to do it. Occasionally having time in house meetings for each member to say something good and something which needs improvement around the house also helps keep communication open.
- D. Work Holidays - Much like regular meals, quarterly work holidays are both practical and community-building. Giving the houses thorough cleaning and doing major projects (like painting) help people feel better about the house. Also, working together on the house builds a sense of community.

