

## ***Disinvested***

### **Episode 7: What Does it Mean to Be Part of a Community?**

Tyler Johnson:           What does it mean to be part of a community?

*“What does it mean to be part of a community?...”*

*“What it means to be part of a community – that’s a great question...”*

*“That’s a great question...”*

*“A very interesting question...”*

*“I love that question...”*

*“To be part of a community is an odd question...”*

*“When you provided this question in advance, and I’ve actually been thinking about it a lot and now I’m stumped...”*

*Background music...*

Tyler Johnson:           Welcome to DISINVESTED, a podcast about reimagining a city and building a stronger, more inclusive community. Created by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. I’m Tyler Johnson.

What does it mean to be part of a community?

For this podcast series, we interviewed nearly 100 people, asking them about a wide range of topics, from affordable housing to gun violence to food insecurity.

At the end of each interview, regardless of the person or topic, we asked everyone this same question. As you might imagine, we heard a wide variety of responses. People told us what their community means to them, and explained what they view as their obligation to the community.

A lot has been written about the breakdown of communities and social bonds. One of the seminal works in this area is the book *Bowling Alone* by Robert D. Putnam, which details the decline in communities across the U.S. and the ensuing problems.

There is ample evidence that developing stronger social bonds can improve a person’s health, happiness, and overall quality of life. Stronger communities are shown to produce better economies, more cohesive governments and less crime.

People want to feel good about the place where they live. They want to know their neighbors, have close friends and participate in social organizations. They want to be engaged.

So how do we build community in a place that's been declining for decades? We're not exactly sure we have the answer to this question. But in this our final episode, we'll share plenty of ideas.

Dennis House: So my name is Dennis House. I live in Hartford. I'm an anchor for WFSB TV Channel 3, the CBS station for Connecticut. I do the 5 o'clock news, the 6 o'clock news, and Face the State on Sunday mornings. I'm a dad, a husband, that's what I do.

You know, one of my regrets in life is that I never served in the military. I had two college roommates who went to ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps], Navy and Marines, and they really gave back to the country and gave back to people. I like to give back in ways that I can and if that means that I can take my public position, and if I can use that to help sell tickets to an event, help raise money for a charity or help get people to pitch in and help with some organization, I will gladly do that.

I really get a lot out of it in terms of after we leave an event and they say, "We raised \$70,000, let's say, for Dress for Success," or who knows what it may be that we're working on at that particular moment. I get a sense of pride in that. I can look around the city and say, these people do some great work.

Well, I love being a part of the Metro Hartford community, I really do. I grew up in a town outside Boston called Norwood, Massachusetts that has a similar sense of community. When I go back there, I can walk into a restaurant and I'm probably going to know somebody. If we go to the movies, or there's a little bowling alley that's been around since my grandfather was a kid, and if we go bowling there, we run into people we know. That's just the way it is.

I feel the same here. I volunteer to be a coach. I do a lot of charity organizations. My kids go to school here. I was at Big Y this morning with my daughter and she's like, "Dad, you know a lot of people here."

To be a part of a community is a wonderful feeling. When we're away and we fly in or we're driving in, as soon as we see the Traveler's Tower, we just have that feeling of, wow we're almost home and this is our home. Even though I grew up somewhere else and I've lived somewhere else – I've lived in Michigan, Florida, New Hampshire, Illinois – Connecticut is my home. Hartford is my home.

Tyler Johnson: When we talk about building stronger communities, it begs the obvious question: How do you measure the strength of a community?

Mark Abraham is the Executive Director of Data Haven in New Haven. Every few years, Data Haven conducts their Wellbeing survey, which asks residents to share their positive and negative feelings about their local communities.

Mark Abraham: Wellbeing is a concept that seeks to measure how people are doing in their lives beyond the traditional measures of assets that we look at in terms of income or owning a car or a house. It really seeks to go beyond that to evaluate the emotional, spiritual, and just overall health and happiness of people in society.

So in terms of trends we've seen in the recent years through these surveys is that residents, especially over the past few years, feel that there's more opportunity in their communities around job access and the fact that jobs are out there and that the region may be growing, which I think is a reflection of the economic trends that we've seen over the past few years.

However, we also see that residents' financial insecurity has risen. There are more residents concerned about postponing healthcare appointments, not getting healthcare, not having savings to rely on in the event that they lose their job. Issues like housing and healthcare have become more expensive for many people. So we do see in some cases that young people, in particular, are seeing more financial insecurity, whereas older adults (those in their fifties or above) are doing as well if not better than they had been a few years ago.

Some issues that affect peoples' wellbeing the most, or in a sense what they would care about most, are topics like not having food, not feeling like your local government is responsive to needs, being able to walk around your neighborhood. I think for each individual person though, there would be a lot of variation in terms of what's most important in their life.

There are some strategies that cities and regions can take to improve trust in neighborhoods. One factor is just greenspaces where people can be outside and enjoy their neighborhood. There are immediate barriers to that such as the quality of parks and safety in sidewalks. I think addressing those factors has been shown to go a long way in sort of building a sense of community and trust, and then obviously all the positive impacts of that are not just on wellbeing and mental health and physical health, but also issues like unemployment. So having more residents out and about and meeting neighbors that can actually reduce unemployment you get more knowledge of what's happening in your community and better access to jobs through that.

*Background music...*

Moraima M. Gutierrez: My name is Moraima M. Gutierrez. Part of a community for me, it's being involved. You have to look at it like you have skin in the game. You are not only a part of the community; you're an investor in this community.

Patricia Kelly: I'm Patricia Kelly. To be a part of the community is that you bring your piece for and not away from. Everybody must do something, and it doesn't really matter if your something is a big something or a little something, but you must bring something for the good of the larger group.

Tyler Johnson: Working at the Hartford Foundation, we have a lot of conversations about philanthropy.

One thing we hear a lot, especially recently, is: "I want to get involved in my community, but I don't know how."

As our national politics have grown more divisive, and discussion around important issues has coarsened, we're starting to see a pushback. Many residents, for the first time ever, want to become personally involved in their communities. They realize they can't leave these critical decisions to someone else. The only problem is, they don't know where to start.

Here's Dr. Tyrone McKinley-Freeman. He's an Assistant Professor of Philanthropic Studies at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

Dr. Tyrone McKinley-Freeman: I think the public perception is that philanthropy is something that very wealthy people do and may not fully recognize that no, it's simply the act of giving. Giving time, giving money, or giving of yourself in some way to benefit a cause or to benefit a person in need.

Philanthropy is a very personal thing where we're driven by particular values that we hold, influences, motivations that we have, and so I would say, search your values and think about the issues in the community that are important to you. Then I think you can begin to think about ways to plug into existing networks that are taking action in those areas. You might choose to donate to an organization. You may want to serve in some capacity.

What we know from research that philanthropy/giving is just plain good for you. It feels good. There are health benefits, as well, and we think about ideas around joy. Giving is a way to experience joy and so there are a variety of reasons why people give, but there are lots of benefits that come from doing it, too. So, take action where you are right now. You don't have to wait.

"Philanthropy" and "philanthropist" is a term that you can own if you want to. Just start by looking at what you have to give, what are the many gifts that the world would benefit from? What are the many gifts that Hartford here would benefit from your giving and sharing with the larger community and then see how you can begin to incrementally give as you are able. And over time, if you acquire more resources, then you're positioned to give more. But again, you don't have to wait. There's no threshold you have to meet. You can start where you are right now.

Tyler Johnson: Giving is a very personal decision. Everyone who chooses to give back to their community has a different reason for doing so.

Here's Jim Venneman. Jim and his wife Ellie are Hartford Foundation donors.

Jim Venneman: I released a poem: *Oh sleep, it was a blessed thing beloved by both of us. But we did gladly give it up when baby David came to us...* Then the poem continued on.

May 24, 1985, he was 11 days old when we adopted him. We were very happy to get him. We had been trying to have a child of our own and we couldn't, so he came into our lives and it was wonderful.

As a child he was very active, very active, running around all the time. He was an okay student. He did graduate from Hall High School in West Hartford, Connecticut. He then went on to Manchester Community College because they have a film program. He was very interested in films. He took a number of classes there, including all the ones that dealt with film and addiction, interestingly, because he knew he had a problem.

I had sensed that things were going downhill. He had basically stopped eating a day or two before and then what happened was that morning when he went out he gave me a hug, but when he got back, he brushed passed me and did go upstairs. Then that evening around 7 o'clock what happened was I went upstairs to see if he wanted dinner or anything. He was breathing, but I could tell he was not doing well, so I called 911. The medics came, and they were very good, of course. They said, "Oh, he's still breathing, he'll be fine in the morning."

Unfortunately, when they got to the hospital, they found that he had a number of internal failures, probably related to the drugs and what they were doing. He did die, they told us, of a brain aneurysm because there was a lot of damage there.

He always cared about others. It could be that he knew in some way that he might need help himself later on. All of his friends came up to us after he died and expressed how caring he had always been about them and he had always put them first.

The best thing that we could do for him was to make sure any memory that people would have in the future would be positive. That's the reason why we ended up doing the unrestricted fund. That means that the Foundation can use the income from that over time to help others, just as he and we would like to think that he would've wanted.

I look at the needs of the community like a big building that is made of bricks. People who have specific interests, they can give to specific projects like a brick. Those of us who want to fill in the gaps, we provide the mortar.

*Background music...*

If people all work together and give to whatever they are interested in, it would be a better place.

Erik Johnson: Hello, my name is Erik Johnson. When something happens to you good or bad, someone cares. You know it's your birthday; did somebody say it's your birthday? Your mom passed away. Saying, "I'm sorry that your mom passed away," and shows up at the funeral.

Being in a community means that you're not alone. Good, bad, or indifferent, when something happens there's someone who cares and says something and reacts to whatever that is.

David Owens: My name is David Owens. I think it means caring about the health of that community, caring about the people in that community, wanting people to have better lives and be successful. Especially for children, just to be prepared for successful adulthood.

Tom Condon: Hi I'm Tom Condon. I think it fulfills a human need. No man is an island and every religious tradition suggests strongly that we engage with our fellow man.

Alan Mattamana: Hi, my name is Alan Mattamana. It's about building bonds, isn't it? I've been reading a lot of Toni Morrison since her passing. One of her quotes, "*If you're free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power then your job is to empower somebody else.*" I thought that was brilliant. It's about giving us a stake in each other.

Tyler Johnson: In 2018, the Hartford Foundation went on a Listening Tour, where we visited all 29 towns in our region and asked residents how we could help improve quality of life in their towns. These residents brought up all sorts of issues, everything from building parks to addressing the opioid crisis.

One common theme that we weren't expecting was the need for community centers and other public spaces. We heard this in both urban and rural towns. People still have the desire to get out and connect with their neighbors, but a lot of times, there's no place to go.

*Background music...*

*"The communities that used to exist that perhaps in this region used to be centered around churches feels like it's not there anymore, right? People are hungry for those places where you can come together as a community."*

*"I look at our neighborhood today; we've got young couples in their twenties and people in their eighties, and I think the connection is not there."*

*"We're very connected via social media and things like that, but we're also extremely isolated and people are really craving that sense of community."*

*"Right, right."*

*"I would really like for the arts-focused type personalities to have a consistent extracurricular place to go."*

*"In Ellington, we lack a kind of all-inclusive playground."*

*"There's a lack of meeting space in town."*

*"A real community center would be wonderful."*

*"I like that idea about a community center."*

*"Places for people of different ages to come together."*

Tyler Johnson: Volunteering is a great way for people to help their community and improve their own quality of life at the same time. However, many organizations in our region struggle trying to find people to volunteer. One organization that is an exception to this rule is CRIS Radio in Windsor. We spoke with Diane Weaver Dunne, Executive Director of CRIS Radio, about how they've been able to find and keep volunteers.

Diane Weaver Dunne: CRIS Radio has been very fortunate to have such an abundance of volunteers and also a waitlist for volunteers, and it is a combination of folks liking the type of volunteer work that we offer – getting behind a mic, recording, but we also know that they truly make a difference.

We hear from our listeners and our listeners tell us what a difference this makes in their life. Family members write to us and say, "Thank you. You've brought a smile back to my dad's face after 10 years of him sitting alone on the couch and not engaging with the rest of the family. So our volunteers are glad to make a difference in the lives of other people and that is a big deal.

We have volunteers that have been here since we began to broadcast over 40 years ago. So the dedication combined with, obviously it's a unique volunteer opportunity and also making a difference in the lives of others has really created sort of a lottery winning here for us.

I think being a part of a community means that you are engaged with other people, that you have a sense of purpose together. Our purpose, both for our listeners and for the people who are volunteers, our purpose is inclusion.

Carol Loomis: Hi, my name is Carol Loomis. I am a volunteer at Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford.

I became a volunteer, I'm thinking about 10 years ago. I first heard of Literacy Volunteers through a guy at my church – this is probably 15 years ago or so – who actually just took a few minutes during our church service and talked about it and just threw it out there for people if they were interested in participating. At that point I did not have the time to devote to it, but it stuck in my mind. When life gave me a little more time, I called and I was blown away by how responsive, how receptive and welcoming the folks here were.

I was a foreign language major through college. I decided to not take that into a career and I never really thought about standing in front of a classroom and teaching. So it, to my great surprise, has almost through a back door giving me an opportunity to do something I never saw myself doing, but feeling a real passion for it.

There are as many ways to volunteer as there are people. There are very brief time commitments, there are longer time commitments. There are very public ways to volunteer, there are quiet private ways to volunteer. I would say find your passion in a way, start with what you love doing and how you like to do it. Obviously, search the internet, talk to people, dip your toe in and give it a try. Give it some time. If it's not the right experience for you try something else. There's so much to do and so many wonderful people out there doing phenomenal things.

Tyler Johnson: There are many ways that a person can give back to their community. At the Hartford Foundation, we like to talk about giving your time, talent or treasure.

All three of those things are important. Even if you don't have money to give right now, there are many other ways that you can help.

One of the best ways to ensure that people care about their community is to teach them about giving at an early age. This starts with parents, but can continue in the school system.

Julia Yacovich is Director of Service Learning at UConn. Herb Virgo is Founder and Executive Director of the Keney Park Sustainability Project. They created a partnership to help give students volunteer opportunities, and create the next generation of socially conscious citizens.

Julia Yacovich: Service learning is a method of teaching and learning that many universities across the United States utilize. It's combining community based projects into course curriculum at the university level.

We have these courses that are essentially activating our students to be in communities and working with communities based upon the needs of those communities, so I can give you some examples. I don't know if you all have heard about the Keney Clock Tower. Our students from



Mechanical Engineering were able to work together with the City of Hartford, Friends of Keney, and Keney Park Sustainability Project in order to restore the historic clock tower in the North end of Hartford.

The students absolutely love this type of work. It provides them opportunities that they would've never been able to reach before.

When you take a community project and combine it with course curriculum, there's some magic that happens. I think I sound like a hopeless romantic right now, but I really am when it comes to this work.

Herb Virgo: Specifically for our community, I think it's important to get people to engage and to volunteer because it kind of breaks down that notion or the attitude that we need to wait for someone to do something for us. It self-empowers people when they can accomplish things, volunteer, or support organizations that are close to them and see some true progress and growth that they had a hand in.

Feeling connected – I feel like a lot of times when young people are having difficulties or making poor choices, a lot of times it's because they don't feel connected to anything or anyone. Feeling and being a part of a community allows people to have the support, the safety and the compassion from their neighbors to be able to make right decisions and make better choices in life.

Julia Yacovich: Now the students, they want this so badly. They don't want to be at home playing their Xbox anymore. They want to be integrated, they want to be involved, they want to be engaged. They want to know that their education is meaningful. They can be invested in the community much, much earlier than adulthood. We can do this from the very beginning, and I think that would change the face of our neighborhoods. The research shows that students are more likely to stay in that community where they volunteer, as well.

Herb Virgo: Planning for the future. I think a lot of times we as community members, specific to this community, we are in crisis mode or survival mode and at some point we have to start thinking about...

*Background music...*

...planting the seeds for five years down the road, ten years down the road, twenty years down the road. This is a great way to do both.

Judy Dworin: To be part of a community is to be part of a group of people that agree on a kind of common mission, that have a sense that amongst all of the agreements, disagreements or whatever, there is some higher purpose, some greater goal that everybody is committed to.

Chip McCabe: To me, being part of a community is having a group of people being engaged and focused on a common goal. You want as many different opinions as possible within that community, but at the same time, your goals should still remain the same, right? That goal is defined by the community itself. That can go, like this question, in a million different directions.

Dr. Cliff Thermer: But I think being a part of the community is appreciating our differences, focusing on the things that we have in common, not the things that separate us and respect one another for the talents that we have, because at the end of the day we need everybody to make this work.

Tyler Johnson: If our goal is to build stronger communities, it's going to require everyone's help. You can look to the story of the Good Samaritan, or Gandhi's quote about being the change you wish to see in the world — we can't wait around for someone else to fix our problems. We all need to step up and take a leadership role in whatever ways we can.

Ted Carroll is the President and CEO of Leadership Greater Hartford. They teach people how to be leaders.

Ted Carroll: Leadership skills are required in our community. If we were living in a perfect world – if we lived in Utopia – there wouldn't be a particular need for leadership or leadership skills, because why would we want to change anything? But leaders change things, leaders help to imagine new possibilities, inspire others to join them in that quest, develop plans, and systematically take steps to ensure that positive changes come about.

How you go about doing that requires a set of skills that don't come naturally, they have to be learned and then they have to be practiced. We all know people who say one thing and do something completely different. We call them *hypocrites*. But, in fact, leaders are people who work very, very hard to ensure that what they say and what they do are in alignment. They absolutely practice what they preach. They, what we call model the way, and they help others to understand what it takes to get from where we are to where we need to be.

A senior minister friend of mine used to say that we need *to summon the courage to risk something big for something good*. Most of the work that we do in leadership takes a long time. The easy stuff can be left to others, but leaders do the hard work and that almost always requires a lot of time, a lot of energy, and a fair number of missed steps.

Anyone who ventures into a leadership role, anyone who is trying to bring about a new project, anyone who is trying to bring about change has also got to be comfortable with failure. So it is, I believe a duty and obligation of citizens to be all that they can be in service to the larger community. The sense of fulfillment, the sense of satisfaction, the sense of joy that comes from giving ourselves to a worthy cause, can't be matched by many other things.

Tyler Johnson: Kim Bishop is the Executive Director of HYPE, Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs. One reason that hype has been successful in building a strong community is their willingness to listen to members and let them lead the way.

Kim Bishop: That's our secret recipe is it all comes from within.

So HYPE celebrated 13 years this past June. It was really the young people that came together when it was first started that set us up for success over these years. While we have a staff of two, it's really our 4,000 members that are the ones who come up with what we do. They tell us what they want to see, what they need, where they want to go and I simply make it happen, that's it. They give me the direction, they set it up and we kind of knock it down together.

It think that's really part of the reason that we've been able to build this sense of community, and as people kind of self-select to age out or move on, they're starting families or they've gotten what they need from us. They have a great job, a great community of friends surrounding them and maybe they don't need us as much anymore, but they're always directing new people to us and I think that's a really great thing is you see this full circle.

It's a relationship to be a part of a community. You have to be willing to kind of put in your energy and efforts and then also, be willing to kind of accept energy and efforts coming out of that community, as well.

That's what's kept me in Hartford, is I think it's the most fantastic community. That's what I love so much about it, it's people coming together and supporting one another, supporting their friends, their neighbors – that's what community means to me and I think we have some really, really great communities here in Hartford.

Tyler Johnson: One way to judge a community is how we welcome new arrivals. Whether it's someone who moved to Hartford for a new job, or a new immigrant who just settled in the U.S., how we treat them and whether we invite them into our community says a lot about who we are.

Kim Bobin is the Family and Early Childhood Coordinator for the Town of Wethersfield, a suburb of Hartford. A big part of her work is helping immigrant families integrate into the school system.

Kim Bobin: So what we're doing well is that people are moving into Connecticut because they think it's an awesome place to raise children, and I think that they are correct. I think that in Connecticut we spend a lot of time talking about people leaving, but I think we need to start noticing that I believe the data is 1:3 of the new residents in Connecticut are immigrants. They are highly educated, they want to work, they are underemployed, and they are a huge asset in our region that is untapped.

Last year we had a Syrian family in our successful Transition to Kindergarten Program and we noticed that one mom had some real serious leadership potential, so we enrolled her in our UConn Parent Leadership Program and she decided that she wanted to go into her child's school to talk about Ramadan. So she brought in some books on Ramadan, she sat in a circle and asked the kindergarteners how many of you know what Ramadan is? There were seven Muslim students in her child's class. She didn't know and the teacher didn't know.

She then went on a community project to create a binder on Islamic holidays, so that's now going to be shared with all seven elementary schools.

When we think about needs we think about things like water, food, and shelter. But as you move up the hierarchy of needs, you have things like love and belongingness....

*Background music...*

...and I feel like to be part of a community is to feel like you belong. It's one thing to be welcomed, it's something else to belong.

Jackie Mandyck:       What does it mean to be part of the community? Wow, it's really about how do we listen to people, figure out their needs and how do you move forward because everybody is not going to have the same needs, everybody is not going to have the same dreams. It gets right down to how do you show compassion to those who might be the same or different from you? How do you start to build community around it with understanding?

David Fay:            David Fay. It's interesting that this country that was built on rugged individualism sometimes has a hard time of accepting that people with other beliefs and other views are just as valid as we individually believe. We need to respect that, we need to work with everybody, and we need to celebrate community.

Erin Kemple:         My name is Erin Kemple. I think being part of community is somewhat like being part of a family. There are people that you get along with really well and you like to spend time with and there are people that you are related to and have to associate with but you don't choose to, and people shouldn't be permitted to choose not to associate with someone because of characteristics that that person has that cannot be changed.

Dennis House:        When I first moved to Hartford the same week I was offered my job at Channel 3, I was offered one in Cleveland.

Tyler Johnson:       Once again, Dennis House.

Dennis House:        I had interviewed in both places. I remember when I came here for one of my interviews at Channel 3, and then when I was walking back afterwards -- they used to fire

off the cannons in front of the Old State House, I don't know if you remember that – and there were the guys out there in the revolutionary garb, the streets were packed. Remember we had G. Fox back then and city was really bustling and I thought to myself, you know this is pretty cool. This is pretty cool that we have this.

All that's gone now. We don't have the Whalers, we don't have the Celtics, we don't have the cannon in front of the Old State House, so in many ways Hartford has lost a little bit, but we've grown a lot.

I'd like to see the city continue to grow. If I were in charge, I would make it a priority to make Farmington Avenue glisten from Downtown Hartford to West Hartford Center. It's three miles. C'mon people we can get this done. Mark Twain House, that neighborhood ought to be thriving. I'd love to see the Whalers come back. I'm not going to lie about that, I think that would be really cool.

I get a lot of feedback; most of it now through social media. Whenever there's a great weekend in the city – for instance a few weekends ago when there was the soccer game and Dunkin Donuts and there was a concert and something else, people really liked to see that. People love to see downtown thriving. They love to go down to downtown Hartford and see the streets packed and the restaurants full. But then on the other hand, they complain that on a Sunday they come down here and the Old State House is closed or they can't find a cup of coffee.

But I think that's part of the big issue with Connecticut, is that people are down on it. They love to complain about it. Cranky Yankees we call them. And why is it that we live in this... It's a beautiful place. I've lived in other states and sure, I loved living in all of them, but I'd have to say that Connecticut really is much more visually appealing than Rockford, Illinois when I lived out there, and we have so much to offer, people shouldn't necessarily knock on it.

That's why I like it, it's very refreshing to meet new people who move here and they're like, "Wow. The shoreline is so beautiful..."

*Background music...*

...look at the mountains, look at this. Look what you have."

Iran Nazario: I think community includes understanding of one another, acceptance of cultures, ethnicities and groups. But there are checks and balances, too. People have to be able to check you when you're slipping a little bit and you should be able to do the same.

Julia Pistell: My name is Julia Pistell. I think that it means you can trust the people around you to listen and support you. You can hangout and just talk. Honestly, it's friendship. I think friendships are a really undervalued part of our culture now. There is so much focus on

work, there is so much focus on family. I'm married, I have a kid, and I have a million billion jobs. All of those things are important, but when you don't spend time with just friends or people who are equals, you're really missing out on a huge part of life. So when I think about the community, that's what I think about.

Jay Williams: It is in our description, a community foundation.

Tyler Johnson: That's Jay Williams, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Jay Williams: We are anchored in the region that we serve that we don't exist without members of the community who are generous with their resources, whether it's their financial resources, their time, their talent, their treasure. It also means that there's an expectation that we should take a leadership role, that we should raise our voice when issues intersect with our mission and our values. It is not just our description as a community foundation, but it's core to our ethos, to who we are, what we do, and why we do what we do.

I hope that any organization that I happen to be blessed to be a part of finds itself just a little bit better off in its mission and in its work when I leave than it was when I came. People need not remember my name. They need not remember anything that I said, but if the organization is better able to carry out its mission as a result of any small contribution that I've made than to me, I would consider that a success.

Tyler Johnson: Well, we've reached the end of our series. It's an honor to be able to share so many ideas and opinions from such a wide array of experts and local residents. We hope you've enjoyed hearing about this wonderful city and the people who live here. Hopefully you've learned something about Greater Hartford and all the work that's going on here.

While we can't lose sight of our challenges, we should also recognize just how much untapped potential we have in our region.

As author Susan Campbell said at the very beginning of this series, *"Everything that we see around us today, we built that, and so we can built something better."*

In 2035, Hartford will turn 400 years old. Let's try to envision what Hartford and so any other American cities could be by then. Once we have that vision, we all need to work together. Regardless of who you are, where you live, your educational background, or your income bracket, there are million ways that you – yes you, can help your community. Whether it's giving money, volunteering your time, helping a nonprofit, going to local meetings, mentoring a young person, or just trying to be a better person to those around you, you can make a huge difference today because that's what it means to be part of a community.

*Background music...*

*Disinvested* Episode 7: What Does It Mean to Be Part of A Community?

Jay Williams: Being a part of a community means that it is not us and them. It means that the highs and lows, the challenges and the opportunities that exist in every community, isn't about what is someone else going to do about it? It means that we all own it. We own the good collectively, we own the bad collectively. We own the pretty and the ugly collectively.

Mark Abraham: Being part of a community means feeling like you're valued and included in sort of the decisions being made proudly in the community. Having a sense of empowerment that you can change what's happening in your town.

Lyle Wray: Community is about give and take. You can't just be a passive consumer, and it's not just being entertained, it's engaging in community issues.

Andrea Barton Reeves: You don't have to have homogeneity in order to have a strong community. What you really need to have is an understanding that you're all working towards the same goal. We want to live in a community where we're safe and where we're valued.

Jason Jakubowski: To me, being a part of a community is very similar to being a part of a family. You have an obligation, you have support, you have loyalty and you also criticize the community, when necessary.

Stephen Austin: For me personally, it's being involved. Whether it's in the educational process, whether it be political process, you always want to be involved in what goes on in your city.

Rex Fowler: For me it means getting to know my neighbors. It means going to the neighborhood meetings.

Eileen Peltier: Inclusiveness that communities don't exclude.

Marilyn Rosetti: Let's enjoy the ride, you know. Oftentimes in a community people don't do that. They're projecting what's going to happen, but they forget to enjoy the ride.

Diane Weaver Dunn: Quite simply, I think it means contributing whatever it is you have to contribute to make the community a better place for everybody to live.

Tyler Johnson: Thanks for listening to DISINVESTED. I'm Tyler Johnson. That's the end of our series, but the Hartford Foundation's work continues. We'd love to hear from you. Find us on social media, or email [hartfordfoundation@hfpg.org](mailto:hartfordfoundation@hfpg.org).

Our thanks to everyone who appeared in this series.

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Music provided by *Among the Acres*.

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