



SCI Woburn

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INTRODUCTION

The mission of SCI Woburn is to strengthen the community by connecting diverse individuals and organizations through civic engagement initiatives. Founded in 2002, SCI has involved thousands of Woburn residents through its various initiatives. SCI Woburn continues to grow and flourish while serving as a model for additional SCI sites.

WHAT IS “SOCIAL CAPITAL”?

✍ Social capital is a term that refers to the value of citizens’ participation in community life and their relationships with one another. As financial capital is essential to the success of a company and our national economy, social capital is closely linked to the health of our communities and our democracy.

✍ The term social capital encompasses a broad range of ways we participate with others in our community, including knowing our neighbors, volunteering, joining community groups and participating in our democracy.

WHY IS INCREASING SOCIAL CAPITAL IMPORTANT?

✍ **High levels of social capital** are directly linked to positive outcomes on issues such as public safety, education and public health. *This makes sense—if we don’t know our neighbors, people don’t volunteer or vote, how can we hope to address important public issues?*

✍ **Supplies of social capital** have declined precipitously over the past 30 years. For example, according to Robert Putnam’s Bowling Alone, there has been a 25% decline in voting rates, a 40% drop in people attending meetings on town/school affairs, and a 45% drop in frequency of having friends over for dinner.

SCI WOBURN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

✍ **Numbers:** During the past year, SCI has engaged **2,342** Woburn residents in civic activities and reached over **7800** individuals. Over **1,600** individuals visit the SCI community website every month. The SCI Civic Welcome Wagon has visited **over 800** new Woburn families.

✍ **Impact:** 100% of Youth Council members have gained leadership skills. 95% of students participating in youth-led debates indicate they have an increased interest in voting and politics. The impact is also captured by the comments of participants, like the one who said, *“As a result of SCI, I’m now registered to vote, and feel like I make a difference.”*

✍ **Recognition:** The SCI model established in Woburn has now been successfully replicated in Dorchester, and plans are underway to bring SCI to other communities in the area. Many articles about SCI have appeared in the Daily Times Chronicle and the Woburn Advocate, and SCI has also been featured in the Boston Globe and Commonwealth magazine. The Woburn Youth Council received national recognition as a Daily Points of Light Award Winner. SCI also gained international attention when founder David Crowley gave keynote speech on social capital in Singapore.

PLEASE SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR A DESCRIPTION OF SCI WOBURN’S PROGRAMS

www.sciwoburn.org

SCI WOBURN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Woburn has a strong array of community groups and a keen sense of community spirit. Yet there are broader trends behind our national decline of social capital that no one Woburn community group can address alone, as they work hard to carry out their important missions. SCI unites individuals and groups interested in working together to increase Woburn's social capital through the following program activities:

1) Engaging Youth: *The Woburn Youth Council is a driving force for engaging youth in civic activity. SCI coordinates the Woburn Youth Council in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, and the City of Woburn. Applications to join the Youth Council available in September. Key activities include:*

- ✂ **Mini-grants:** Each year the Youth Council makes mini-grants to youth-initiated community projects. Last year, over 300 youth participated as a result of innovative projects.
- ✂ **YAC-Youth Adult Connections :** The YAC brings youth and adults together to discuss issues of concern and to develop strategies for addressing these issues.
- ✂ **Civil Rights Forum:** In addition to the Youth Council, SCI has partnered with, the Woburn School Department and St. John's Baptist Church to offer the Woburn Civil Rights Forum. This program allows for students to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement from those with first-hand experience.

2) Developing Community Leaders: *SCI develops the leadership skills of community residents through a number of projects, including:*

- ✂ **Leadership Training:** Participants come together to receive leadership training and to learn about community issues through Leadership Woburn and other training activities. Recent training focused on volunteer recruitment and project planning, helping people get ready for Neighborhood Day and other local community projects.

3) Uniting Diverse Individuals and Groups: *SCI collaborates with other community groups to plan community events that bring people together.*

- ✂ **Woburn Neighborhood Day:** Each September, SCI organizes Neighborhood Day which consisted of residents across the city developing activities that connect neighbors as they do something to improve the community.
- ✂ **Citizens Park Concert Series:** The Series brings a diverse array of music to Downtown Woburn. SCI has joined with the Woburn Redevelopment Authority (WRA), and WREN to coordinate this series the past 3 years.
- ✂ **Woburn Holiday House Tour (Bi-Annual):** Woburn residents celebrate the holidays with their neighbors as they tour some of Woburn's most interesting and best-decorated homes.
- ✂ **Bikeway Project:** SCI is working with the WRA to facilitate public involvement in the development of the Woburn Loop Bikeway Project in the South End.
- ✂ **Woburn Community Network:** SCI coordinates quarterly meetings of Woburn community groups to foster information sharing and collaboration.

4) Connecting Citizens to Information: *Combines the use of information technology and "old fashioned" face-to-face contact to provide citizens with information they need to participate in civic life.*

- ✂ **Community Website:** www.SCIWoburn.org provides listings of community organizations, volunteer opportunities, links, and a community calendar. Over 1,600 people visit the site each month.
- ✂ **Week in Woburn Email:** This civic email alert provides over 450 subscribers with timely information on SCI projects and other community happenings. Sign up at www.SCIWoburn.org.
- ✂ **The SCI Civic Welcome Wagon:** Volunteers visit with new community residents and deliver a "Welcome to Woburn" information package to help them feel welcomed and get involved.
- ✂ **Candidate Forums:** SCI and the Woburn Business Association (WBA) held forums for the November 2005 elections. This gave the residents of Woburn a chance to learn more about the candidates and participate in electoral process. The Youth Council also coordinated successful mayoral debate at WMHS.