

Join or Die with The Village Square

Saving democracy one group at a time.

The Big Picture:

As we enter our 17th season, we've been given an incredible opportunity through a national grant to scale our impact in this hometown we share. And the nation will be watching, as the field is turning its attention to local, ground-up bridge building to light the way in healing our fractured country. We are the established leader in the local space, so hundreds of bridging organizations have their eyes on us. It's time to show them what we can do together!

The 2023/24 Season: *Join or Die!*

Americans can agree on one thing – we have some very big problems to solve. Yet blaming, fear, and blindspots are clouding our judgment and holding us back from achieving our collective potential. Meanwhile, loneliness has skyrocketed as Americans have fewer friends, we don't know our neighbors and fewer of us belong to groups. But what does loneliness have to do with a healthy democracy? It turns out... EVERYTHING!

“As traditional tribes of place evaporate, we rally against common enemies so we can feel part of a team. ... There's a path forward—but reversing our decline requires something radical: a rediscovery of real places and human-to-human relationships.” [Them by Ben Sasse](#)

Social Groups: The path forward – and where YOU come in. (Hopefully... pretty please.)

We're doubling-down on what we know works best – lead with relationships first, building trust and respect to pave the way for civil dialogue. This season, we're devoted to creating and supporting small groups of citizens coming together across divides and uniting through common interests for a good time and good conversation. We'll have book groups, foodie groups, supper clubs, podcast groups, and more. ([Check out some of our ideas here](#) and feel free to add your ideas.)

We're looking for community-minded superstars (YOU!!) to pair up and lead a small group of people doing something you love. It could be eating, gardening, walking, games, sewing, sports – whatever you want, as long as it allows for repeated contact with the same people, in person, doing something you enjoy - even 4 or 5 meetings will be meaningful, and at whatever pace you prefer (once a week, once a month).

We're here to help refine your idea, find a co-lead, recruit members, book meeting locations, send reminders – basically whatever you need! We won't leave you hanging.

Join or Die. Are you with us?

We're delighted to be welcoming cultural icon Dr. Robert Putnam (author of “Bowling Alone” about the dangerous loss of social capital between Americans) in two ways this year:

- We'll be screening Dr. Putnam's new film “Join or Die” (<https://putnamdoc.com/>) on (tentatively) August 25th at the Challenger Center. After the film, group leads will have the opportunity to share about their group and fill open spots.
- Dr. Putnam will join us digitally on October 5th at 7pm.

79% of Americans say, given the opportunity, they would play a part in reducing social division in America. ([Listen First Project](#)) **Are you in?** Email leon@villagesquare.us to get started.