



# PERSONAL VILLAGE



## NEWSLETTER

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### **The Sunday Coffee Alternative Family**

Alternative family is the antidote for the stressed, isolated nuclear family that is under so much pressure in today's world. Anytime you have a gathering of people who support your immediate family or provide an back-up to it, you have an alternative family.

It is 4 PM on Sunday afternoon and the driveway is beginning to fill up with cars. Neighbors troop through the hedge, kids come scampering in with noisy fanfare, cakes, pies, and cookies pile up on the kitchen counter. Soon a noisy, happy gathering of families and friends packs the kitchen. It is Sunday Coffee at the Holland's.

It all started simply enough many years earlier when Whitney and Bruce, their little children underfoot and the day's chores finished, developed the Sunday ritual of sitting down for the American equivalent of afternoon English tea.

Gradually they invited friends and neighbors to join them. Over the years a wide circle of people began to show up from far distances. Friends and neighbors brought their children and sometimes other family members. Louise, the elderly widow up the street, brought her walker as she hobbled in the driveway. Leslie, a single parent, brought her children to give them the experience of an extended family. Several singles and friends of friends began showing up. Every week it was a different mix of people, sometimes only four or five, sometimes forty or fifty.

The group welcomed new people and worked together to celebrate holidays, put on weddings and help in times of need. Everyone thrived, including many children who grew up in this rich family village. Occasionally they met somewhere else, but Whitney's kitchen remained the central gathering place, somewhat like a private town square.

This alternative family event did not happen by chance. When the Holland's saw what was developing out of a simple family ritual, they became very purposeful. They knew that families do better if they can identify with a consistent place and time; so they made a special effort to offer this event every week, open to everyone.

You too can create an alternative family like they did. Simply invite people you enjoy to join and meet often and regularly. It does not matter what you do together as long as it includes some fun. Very soon relationships will develop and an alternative family will begin to form. For more ideas go to Personal Village — Chapters 10 and 11.



A preview from forthcoming book, *The Heart of Community — The Complete Guide to Personal Village*, to be published in 2008.

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