Hospitality and Health Outcomes: The Cost of Social Isolation and How to Address It
Agenda

A Story of Radical Hospitality

Loneliness and Its Cost

Tools to Address the Issue

Call to Action
I begin shopping at the African Shop in Garden City.
Our Perception of Somalis

"Me and my nation against the world. Me and my clan against my nation. Me and my family against the clan. Me and my brother against the family. Me against my brother."

- Somali Proverb (so we had heard)
I am received with similar skepticism and distrust.
Halima calls Benjamin at 10:30pm.
Invitation for dinner.
A feast in the middle of the night.
March, 2016

“You’re no longer a stranger in my home. We are family now.”
One week later, Halima calls Benjamin again, this time at 8:30pm.

“My mother is sick. Come now.”
Halima’s mom takes a trip on (a private airplane) to the Mayo Clinic.
An invitation to teach (and learn) in The Horn.
“When you to Somalia, I will go before you.”
“Will you carry this bag on the plane with you?”
A Trip to The Horn of Africa.

November/December, 2016
An unlikely encounter with an AK-47.
A Meeting with the President

“So, you’re the one from Kansas.”
A Meeting with the President

“I am also a Kansan.”
Delivering the Bag.

November/December, 2016
What Else Was Happening In 1968?

King Shot to Death in Memphis

Relief Forces Push Close to Khe Sanh

Curfew Reimposed; Guard Sent Back

Louisiana Negroes React

LBJ Postpones Trip to Hawaii

Governor, HHH Hold Confidential Talk

Satellite Is Hurlcd Into Wrong Orbit
Is the hospitality described in this story common?

Why not?
Do Rural Americans Audition for New Family Members Well?

(Raising two fingers and a thumb off your steering wheel is not hospitality.)
By a show of hands, how many of us have invited a new person into our home in the past 6 months?
Success with Recruiting Physicians to Kearny County
Feedback from Newcomers

"They love what I do for them, but they don’t love me."
Feedback from Newcomers

"This is a great place to train if your desire to move to a closed country where people are suspicious of outsiders. We haven’t been in a single home in our first year in this community.”
Feedback from Newcomers

"For the first six months after I arrived here, I wondered if I had unknowingly done something that had caused people in the community to think poorly of me. I now realize it’s not that they think poorly of me. They don’t think about me at all.”
Feedback from Newcomers

”This is a great place to practice medicine, but a tough place to live. If only we had family here.”
MEN WANTED
for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honor and recognition in case of success.

Ernest Shackleton 4 Burlington st.

MEN—Near-appearing young men of ordinary between ages...
How we view our hospitality toward others.
How **others** view our hospitality toward others.
What is the cost of loneliness?
What is the cost of loneliness?

Lack of social relationships is as strong a risk factor for mortality as are smoking, obesity or lack of physical activity.

Older adults who are lonely have an increased risk of dying sooner and are more likely to experience a decline in their mobility, compared to those who are not lonely.

“Public health is a mess. Don’t we have bigger worries than whether everyone has a buddy?”
A Conversation with a Wise Woman

“There are four primary themes that show that rural social isolation negatively affects health.”

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
A Conversation with a Wise Woman

“Mental health, general health and well-being, diminished access to basic resources, and quality of life.”

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
“The most common is mental health.”
A Conversation with a Wise Woman

“Why mental health?”
“People are not wired to be alone. The consequences of widespread loneliness are catastrophic and costly.”

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
What is the cost of loneliness?

Medicare spent an estimated $134 more monthly ($1,608 annually) for each socially isolated older adult than it did for those in the connected category who had more typical levels of social contacts. The aggregate impact is $6.7B annually.

This additional spending is comparable to what Medicare pays for certain chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure and arthritis.

https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2017/10/medicare-spends-more-on-socially-isolated-older-adults.pdf
How can we measure loneliness?

Total number of children, other family members, and friends with whom they have a close relationship.

Number of friends with whom they have a close relationship.

Whether they have different types of relationships or whether their relationships are all of a single type (e.g., relationship only with children or with children and friends).

How often they have any form of contact (broadly defined as meet, talk, or write) with their children, other family members, and friends.

How often they have in-person meetings with their children, or family members, or friends.
Do you remember Don George?
Don’s life was complicated.
“The 2030 Problem”

Population of Americans Aged 65 and over, in Millions

Source: (NP-T4) Projections of the Total Resident Population by 5 Year Age Groups, Race, and Hispanic Origin with Special Age Categories: Middle Series, 1999 to 2100

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1464018/
There is not enough money in our economy to pay to replace the American family.
So what do we do about it?
Recharge family concept and value of seniors in American culture.
Redefining the Value of Seniors

We must reassess the responsibilities and assets of elders. All ages need roles in life.

Elders must pass on to future generations what they have learned from life.

The elderly are a growing resource in the US and an opportunity to be seized. More than half of all elderly volunteer their time.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1464018/
Physical Integration Between Generations

Although some towns have seen a trend toward “senior-only” housing, others are exploring options in integrated apartment buildings.

Most older people prefer a mixed-age neighborhood over one restricted to people their own age.

Some community centers are integrating senior centers with child-care centers, facilitating cross-age interaction and at the same time conserving space and resources.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1464018/
Baby Boomers have made an art of enjoying and taking pride in everything about caring for children.

The needed cultural shift is for children and communities to find more enjoyment and pride in providing for the care of parents and neighbors.
In rural America, there are no purchasable replacements for family.
Elderly people aren’t the only ones who are isolated.
Our teen suicide problem.
The Beauty of Rural America
To recharge the concept of family, we must redefine with whom we break bread.
Hospitality doesn’t need to look like a Pinterest page.
It can look like this.
Hospitality requires reciprocal relationships.
“We’re having folks over. What can you bring?”
Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner
Are acts of hospitality strategic or tactical?

One-time events are tactical…favors.

Ongoing events to integrate people into a community may require more energy, resources, and commitments.
Question to Consider

What are the distinctive characteristics of hospitality in your home, church, civic group, organization, or community?
Question to Consider

What would community health look like in ten years if hospitality is an accomplished outcome for your home, church, civic group, organization, or community?
Question to Consider

Imagine being able to truthfully say, “No one is lonely in our community. Everyone has family here.”
It is not sustainable for you to do this alone.

(It’s a good thing you’re a leader.)
WHAT: OUTCOME NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?
WHO: ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?
WHERE: ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE?
WHY: ISN’T IT ALREADY HAPPENING?
HOW: DO WE MEASURE ITS SUCCESS?
WHEN: DO WE EXPECT TO SEE PROGRESS?
Develop a clear strategy for hospitality in your home, church, civic group, organization, or community.

Write it down and get it done.
What happened the year after 1968?
“We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.”

President John F. Kennedy
Moon Speech at Rice University
September 12, 1962
and do the other things
“But Carrie, I have no problem being kind to people and personally acknowledging them.”
When you ask how they’re doing, are you actually seeking an honest response?

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
“Isn’t each person responsible for building and maintaining their own relationships?”
“Americans are not great at making friends and developing authentic relationships.”

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
A Conversation with a Wise Woman

“This gets harder as we get older.”

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
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University of Minnesota School of Public Health
“So why don’t folks just speak up if they need a friend?”
"There is strong stigma with admitting that you’re lonely."

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
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University of Minnesota School of Public Health
“So what do we do about it?”
A good way to build social connectedness is to find ways everyone can contribute to community.

Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW
Assistant Professor, Division of Health Policy and Management
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
Not for the faint of heart
Inviting someone you don’t know or trust into your home for a meal is a simple act of courage.
An effective way to understand loneliness is to intentionally place ourselves in an environment where we are outsiders. It is important to do so with humble heart and a grounded sense of personal identity.

We don’t have to compromise our own values to surround ourselves with people who are different from us.
The Greatest Nation in the World.
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