Facts to Know

Suggested group size: six to eight children per adult volunteer
Time frame: group meeting 30 to 60 minutes
Recommended ages: 5- to 7-year-olds (kindergarten through second grade)

Purpose
Youth explore community dynamics and their role as a citizen, working together to make their community a better place to live.

Materials:
- Small cardboard boxes, wrapped in paper (one per member)
- Peel-and-stick nametags (one per member)
- Different state flag printouts, 4 by 6 inches (one flag per member)
- Club snack mix ingredients (for example, cereal, marshmallows, chocolate chips, candies, snack crackers, nuts, dried fruit, pretzels)
- Large mixing bowl
- Napkins
- Small cups or scoops
- Ball of string
- Blank paper
- Blank thank-you card
- Paper plate
- Glue
- Markers or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Craft sticks
- Clay or play-dough (optional)
Citizenship is an important, trusting relationship between an individual and his or her community. The choices, actions and deeds of one community member have an effect on the whole. What one community member does will affect another. We are all connected.

You need to follow some basic guidelines when being an active member of your community. These guidelines tie in closely with the idea of “being a good citizen.”

Listening to others, being a good neighbor, obeying laws and rules, respecting authority, protecting the environment, keeping informed, voting and doing your share to make your school and community a better place to live are all characteristics of people who find that being a good citizen is easy to do.

It is in the shelter of each other that people live. – Irish proverb

Prior to the meeting, collect and wrap many small boxes of assorted shapes and sizes in plain paper. Suggested box types are milk cartons, cracker boxes, juice boxes, animal cracker boxes or toaster pastry boxes. Identify each building with a label such as “City Hall,” “Post Office,” “School,” “House” or “Fire Department.”

1. With the members, say: “We all want to be good people. Good people are good citizens. That means being good citizens to help make their home, school, community and country a better place. They help make the community a good place to live for everyone. Today we’ll think about our community and the people who make it a good place.”

2. Display the miniature building you created before the meeting from small boxes. Encourage each member to select a building to color and decorate. Identify each building and talk about what happens there. If time permits, members might add details such as flags and flowers or do more than one building.

3. Then say: “But the citizens in our community are more important than the buildings. Good citizens help others. What are some examples of what good citizens do?”

4. Encourage members to share ideas of ways to help the community and others. Mention the following: recycling; voting; obeying school rules and not missing school; obeying laws; paying taxes; helping the homeless, hungry, sick and lonely; and taking care of property.

5. Make paper cutouts of good citizens doing what good citizens do. Have the members color the people and stand them up with craft sticks and clay, or simply glue them to the sides of the buildings. Have them add details that show how they are helping.

6. When finished, ask members to identify the good citizens and how they are helping. Ask: “Who are the good citizens in our community? What are they doing? What can you do as citizens?”

(Miniature Community, 2002)
Do: Looking Within
We Are All Connected Club Snack Mix
(20 minutes)

Prior to the meeting, gather several different food items to add to a club snack mix, a small cup or scoop for each and a large mixing bowl for the final snack mix. Some ingredient ideas are cereal, marshmallows, chocolate chips, candies, snack crackers, nuts, dried fruit and pretzels.

1. Place each of the snack mix ingredients in small bowls or open the containers and place a small scoop or cup next to each on a table. Then say: “For this activity, we will be making a snack mix together. To make the mix, each member will choose one snack ingredient and add it to the large bowl. Remember that we are all connected and that one person’s choice will affect each of the other people in the club.”

2. Ask one member to come forward, choose one ingredient and place a small cup or scoop of that ingredient in the large mixing bowl. Then select another member to select the next ingredient. Each member will take a turn adding one ingredient to the club snack mix.

3. When everyone has added an ingredient, stir the mix and pass out a small portion to each member.

4. While they are enjoying the club snack mix, ask the members how their ingredient choices affected the overall club snack mix. Was one ingredient chosen more or less often? If some members have food allergies, would each member be able to share the mix?

Do: Digging Deeper
Community Helpers Web
(15 minutes)

1. Discuss the word “community” with members. Explain that communities are made up of many neighborhoods. Then discuss jobs that good citizens do to make the community work.

2. Ask the members to help make a list of “community helpers” and the type of help they provide. For each “community helper” identified, make a nametag for that helper on a sheet of peel-and-stick blank labels. Some examples of “community helpers” might be garbage collector, banker, teacher, bus driver, grocery bagger, nurse, police officer, county commissioner, coach.

3. Then have the members sit in a circle. Hand a ball of string to one member. Instruct him/her to hold onto the end of it. Then he or she will roll the ball of string to another member on the other side of the circle. Instruct the recipient of the ball of string to hold onto a piece of the string and then roll it to someone else. Repeat these actions until everyone in the group holds a piece of string.

4. Once everyone has the string, a “web” will have formed in the center of the circle. From the edge of the circle, tug firmly on the string. Which students felt the pull? Repeat this several more times.

5. Afterward, ask the members what citizenship means. Emphasize that being a good citizen means doing one’s share to help the whole group. Then say: “We all must work together as a team because one person’s actions are felt by others. If one of us didn’t hold onto the string, the web wouldn’t be complete.”

6. Demonstrate how they are connected by pulling on part of the “web” again. Ask members to share other examples of how they are connected to others and how their actions affect people around them.

(Community Helpers, 2002) and (Pulling-Together Web, 2002)
Reflect/Apply

Reflect: Bringing Closure

Statehood Friendship Wreath (15 minutes)

Prior to the meeting, cut out the center of a paper plate, leaving a 2- or 3-inch ring on the outside. Also, print out at least one different state flag for each member. If you have 12 members, choose 12 state flags to print. Flags images should be at least 4 by 6 inches.

1. Show members a map of the United States. Ask them to share all the different states they have visited, where they have friends or family living, etc. Ask:
   a. What’s nice about living in North Dakota? North Dakota is part of a larger community of states we know as the United States of America. What good things do the people of North Dakota do as a member of the United States?
      — Some examples are grow food, produce oil and welcome visitors.

2. Ask them if they can think of any good things that come from the other states. Suggest benefits of community membership such as having public parks, schools, interstates and services.

3. Pass around the state flag images. Each member will select one state flag. Instruct members to trace their handprint over the center of the image, covering as much of the flag as their hand can cover. Then, with an adult’s help, members will cut out their handprint.

4. Finally, each member will glue his or her handprint flag to the edge of the cut-out paper plate, filling the plate edge with handprints all the way around. Ask members:
   a. The club would like to share this Statehood Friendship Wreath with a community helper. To which community helper can we give this wreath?
      — Some examples are county commissioner, school board member, city council member, mayor.

5. Remember to attach a note thanking that community helper for his or her contribution to the community.

Apply: Going Beyond

1. Plan and complete a community service project. Looking for ideas? Why not contribute to recycling efforts, keep the school grounds and public parks clean, make blankets for shelter animals, plant flowers or read a story with the elderly.

2. Help out with family chores. Being a good community member is like being a good family member. Help out around home, take out the trash, make the beds, fold laundry, walk a pet, wash the dishes or help cook supper.

3. Make an emergency contact list. As good citizens, we can protect things from being harmed. On a blank sheet of paper, list the names of emergency contacts and their phone numbers. Emergency contact lists usually include a hospital, police station, fire station, poison control and a grandparent or other family member.

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Resources

Miniature Community. (2002). Good Ideas for Helping Young People Develop Good Character, pg. 161, Josephson Institute of Ethics, Marina del Rey, Calif. CHARACTER COUNTS! And the 6 Pillars of Character are service marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.

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For more information, see www.ndsu.edu/4h

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