

# How families can help communities rebound after the pandemic

The global pandemic that began in late 2019 and spread into 2021 had a devastating impact on the world. The human toll was significant, as millions of people across the globe lost their lives to the COVID-19 virus. The virus also had far-reaching economic consequences, many of which were felt in small towns and communities that had been thriving prior to the pandemic.

Vaccination rollouts that began in the final weeks of 2020 gave many people a glimmer of hope that life would soon return to some semblance of normalcy. The effort to restore towns and cities will require a community-wide effort, and families can do their part as the world slowly emerges from the pandemic.

Support local businesses. A recent survey from the expert

business mentors at Score<sup>™</sup> found that just 34 percent of small business owners indicated their operations were currently profitable in late 2020. The numbers were even worse for minority-owned businesses, as the survey found that just 26.5 percent of Black business owners had businesses that were currently profitable while the number was 29.2 percent among Hispanic-owned businesses. A thriving local economy is a vital component of a strong community, and families can do their part in the pandemic recovery by making a concerted effort to support the small businesses in their towns and cities, especially those owned by minorities. Support locally owned restaurants instead of chain restaurants when dining out or ordering

in. Even visiting a locally owned barbershop instead of a chain hair cutter can be a great way to help community-based businesses recover.

Lend a hand to the elderly. At the onset of the pandemic, public health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization identified elderly men and women as among the most vulnerable to serious illness if they were infected with COVID-19. As a result, many aging men and women spent much of 2020 isolated from their friends and families. Families can help seniors in their communities recover from that isolation by volunteering at local senior centers, inviting aging neighbors over for weekly

dinner or inviting them along on family outings to the beach or park. Such efforts can reassure seniors, many of whom played vital roles in building the communities they call home, that their neighbors have not forgotten them.

Take active roles in the community. Recovering from the pandemic won't be easy for any community. Some small businesses closed for good while others struggled to stay afloat, and local towns and cities lost significant tax revenue as a result. Residents, including adults and children, can help their towns and cities

overcome budget shortfalls by becoming more active in their communities. Organize initiatives like park clean-ups to keep communities clean if budget constraints have forced local officials to cut back on such services. In addition, attend town or city council meetings to lend support to programs or even recommend new initiatives to help the community recover from the pandemic.

Restoring communities after the pandemic will be a tall task. But it's one that will be more easily accomplished if families pitch in and do their part.



# How exercise can help you live longer

There are many reasons to get in shape. Weight loss is a prime motivator, as is reversing a negative health effect, such as high cholesterol or increased diabetes risk. Routine exercise also can improve life expectancy. WebMD says exercise keeps the body and brain healthy. That's why exercise should be an important component of daily life no matter one's age. Research published in the journal *Immune Aging* found that how people age is 75 percent lifestyle and only 25 percent genetics, which

underscores the importance of the lifestyle choices people make. Cardiorespiratory fitness Many health experts say that cardiorespiratory fitness may be just as valuable a metric to determine overall health as blood pressure and lipid levels. People with a high aerobic capacity can deliver oxygen to tissues and cells efficiently to fuel exercise, according to data published in 2014 in the journal *Aging & Disease*. In a study involving 11,335 women, researchers compared V02 max, also known as aerobic capacity, in

women with mortality data. Women who were fit from a cardiovascular perspective had a lower death rate from all causes, irrespective of the women's weight. Manage stress and mood Exercise has direct stress-busting benefits that can promote longevity. The Mayo Clinic says physical activity can increase the production of endorphins, which are the body's feel-good neurotransmitters. In addition, exercise can imitate the effects of stress, helping the body adjust its

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