

Fostering Adult Connections at Your Library: The Third Place



Who are we?



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What is a “Third Place”?

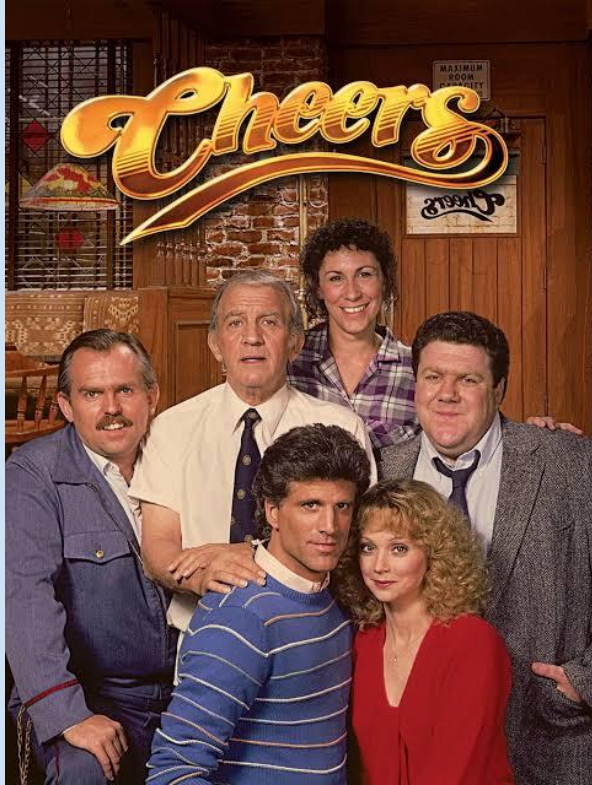
According to sociologist Ray Oldenburg, a “third place” is where people develop community, build relationships, and connect in a place outside of the home or work environment.

Other “third place” locations could include:

- Gyms
- Parks
- Coffee shops
- Church
- Restaurants/cafes

Libraries have the benefit of being free and available in all seasons, and often daily! Often, new people to meet, and new programs to engage with.

What are the characteristics of a “Third Place”?



Characteristics of a “third place:”

- Fosters connection
- Inclusive
- Accessible
- Anyone is welcome
- Casual
- People know you (even if not everybody knows your name!)

Why are they important?



- Connection/Relationships
- Community hubs
- Loneliness epidemic
- Financial constraints
- Foster civic engagement
- Sense of belonging

Is loneliness really a big issue, and how can libraries help?

Loneliness is definitely a significant issue, and increasing post-COVID.

- National Poll on Healthy Aging from University of Michigan, in 2023 1 in 3 adults reported feeling isolated from others (up from 27% in 2018).
- The older one gets, the higher the likelihood they will feel isolated and lonely, with 43%, almost one of every two, adults over 60 reporting these feelings.
- Older adults are estimated to spend about 80% of their time at home... without community.
- Libraries are “well-poised” to provide support to older adults across socio-economic ranges.
- We can provide social interaction, enrichment, and a sense of community!

Response of Libraries has largely been “Challenge Accepted!” So... How can we help?

WELCOMING, VARIED, INCLUSIVE, ACCESSIBLE PROGRAMMING!

Here are a few examples of what we do at CPCL.





STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN:
As I age and come closer to the end of my life, I think back on the women who have had a big influence on me. I hope to reconnect with them in eternity.



Varied programs, from history lectures and discussions, to crafts, food programs, and off-site adventures.



Relevance to Advocacy

In light of SEA1, and other library issues, it is more important than ever to build library support at the local level. Patrons can be excellent advocates!



Discussion time

How does your library help foster community by acting as a Third Place?

Are there any strategies, programs, or ideas you would like to try?



Resources

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