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Better Together: Restoring the American Community

Robert D. Putnam, Lewis Feldstein

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In his acclaimed *Bowling Alone,* Robert Putnam describes the United States as a nation in which we have become increasingly disconnected from one another and in which our social structures have disintegrated. But in the final chapter of that book he detects hopeful signs of civic renewal. In *Better Together* Putnam and coauthor Lewis Feldstein tell the inspiring stories of people who are reweaving the social fabric by bringing their own communities together or building bridges to others.
Better Together examines how people across the country are inventing new forms of social activism and community renewal. An arts program in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, brings together shipyard workers and their gentrified neighbors; a deteriorating, crime-ridden neighborhood in Boston is transformed by a determined group of civic organizers; an online "virtual" community in San Francisco allows its members to connect with each other as well as the larger group; in Wisconsin schoolchildren learn how to participate in the political process to benefit their town. As our society grows increasingly diverse, say Putnam and Feldstein, it's more important than ever to grow "social capital," whether by traditional or more innovative means. The people profiled in *Better Together* are doing just that, and their stories illustrate the extraordinary power of social networks for enabling people to improve their lives and the lives of those around them.

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