



# Welcome!

## **VIRTUAL CHAPTER LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14 | 12 PM - 1:30 PM CT**  
**TOPIC: MAKING AN IMPACT**





# Our SWCS Experience



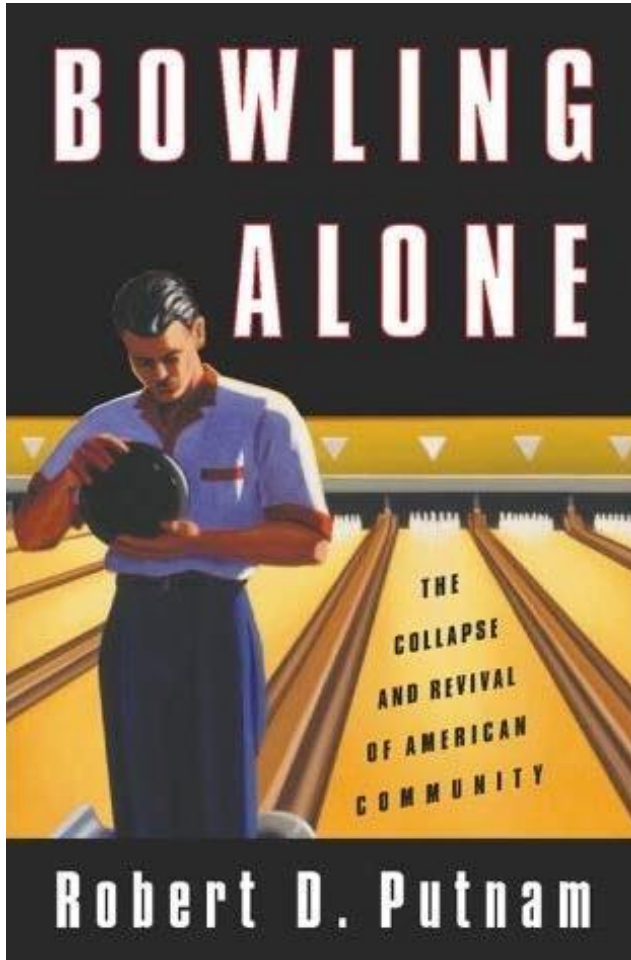


# Training Goals

1. Review the evolution of community building
2. Share elements of recent successful community building efforts
3. Unveil how, together, chapters and headquarters are supporting the next generation of SWCS leaders to co-create the future of community building



# Value and Evolution of Social Capital



- Social capital is defined as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam 1995)
- Core idea: social networks have value
- We benefit from having a network of connections AND others benefit from having a network of connections
- Improves mental and physical health, child welfare, creates safe and productive neighborhoods, economic prosperity, more functional democracy
- We reciprocate good actions of others
- Bridges social divides
- Forges stronger bonds between members
- 10x more likely to donate and volunteer; there is even a correlation between entertaining friends at your home and volunteering

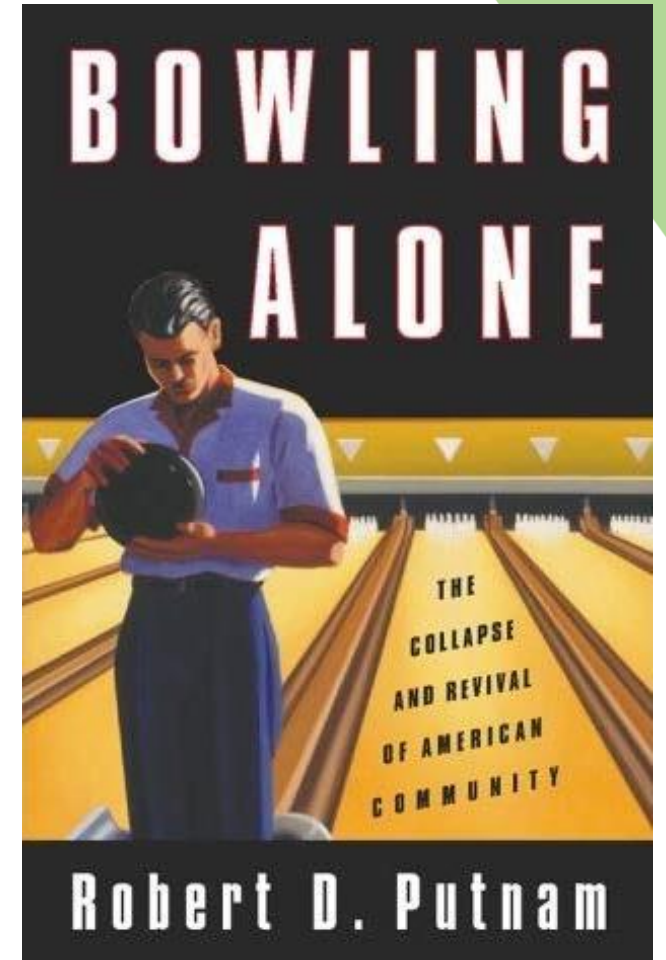
# Value and Evolution of Social Capital

Declining since 1960s,  
as measured through:

- Participation in public meetings
- Membership or leadership within a club
- Civic engagement
- Religious participation
- Professional associations/unions
- Group social activities (bridge clubs, dinners with friends, bowling)

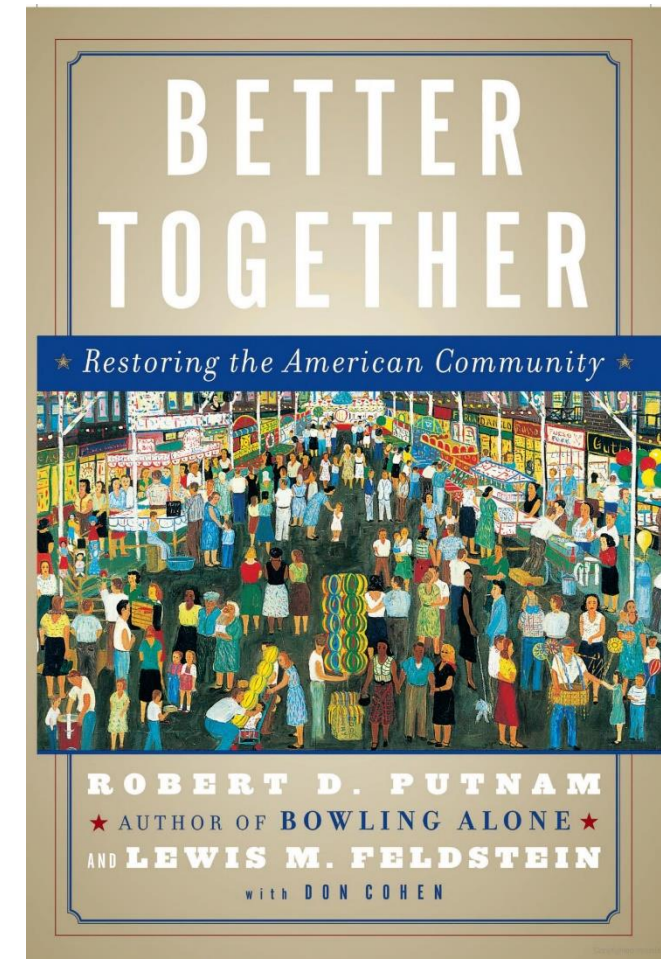
Why is it declining?

- Generational change
- Pressure on our personal and professional time
- Sprawl
- Technology and mass media (TV, now social media)
- Decline in trust
- Other reasons specific to professional organizations (job satisfaction, changes to career area)
- Groups have increased



# THE SEQUEL! Better Together: Restoring the American Community

- Brings together a dozen case studies of successful community-building efforts in the United States
- Draws out common themes and offers a set of tentative guidelines
- Relate to the work we do as chapters





# #1 Key Finding: Bigger Isn't Necessarily Better

- Building social capital is time-consuming and labor intensive
- Process of relationship-building based on trust and reciprocity
- Smaller can be better and more impactful
- Our chapter work is just like our conservation work
- Small steps, when taken together, have a big impact



A truckload of trash in the Anacostia River

# Look at Your Collective Impact!



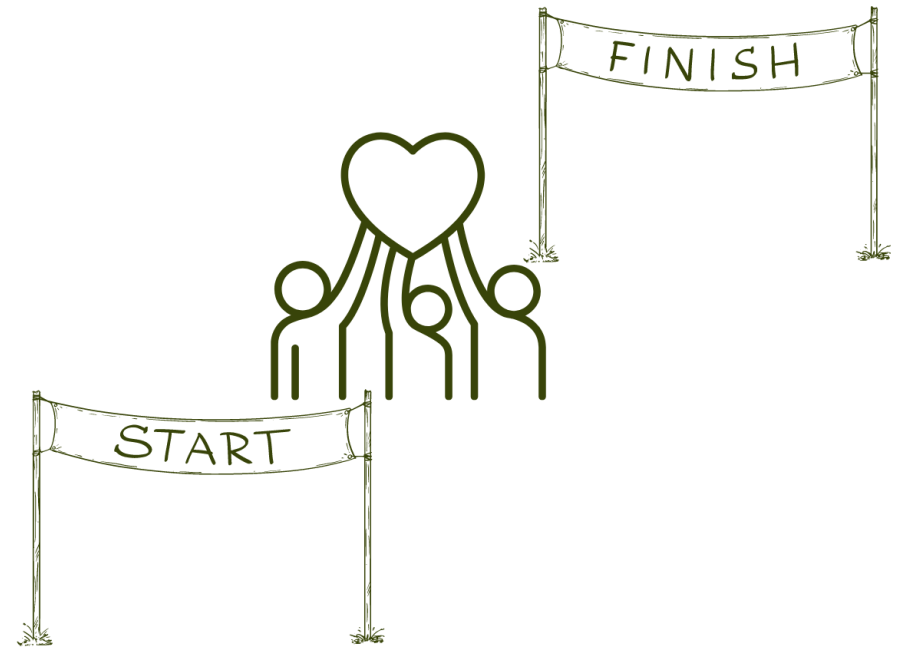
In 2022, SWCS chapters –

- Hosted 50 events
- Gave out \$28,980 in scholarship funds
- Partnered with 21 other organizations
- Provided financial support to 33 members
- Sent 24 chapter leaders to the 77<sup>th</sup> SWCS International Annual Conference



## #2 Key Finding: Refocus on Impact

- Social capital is best realized in the pursuit of impact
- Case studies found social connectedness was a byproduct of working toward some specific objective, not an end in itself
- Reset our expectations to align with the impact we want to have first AND that will bring in more people



# Value of Active Chapters

- Chapters who have held an event in the past two years have an average of 3x more members than inactive chapters
- Active chapters enable active members and vice versa





## #2 Key Finding: Refocus on Impact

- **Impact Defined:** Change or benefit to a community or society, Ultimate WHY, What we are striving for a generation from now
- **Impact at SWCS (according to staff and board):**
  - Diverse set of conservation professionals – by discipline, by geography, by lived experience
  - Action
  - Making a difference
  - Passion
  - Knowledge
  - Connection and community



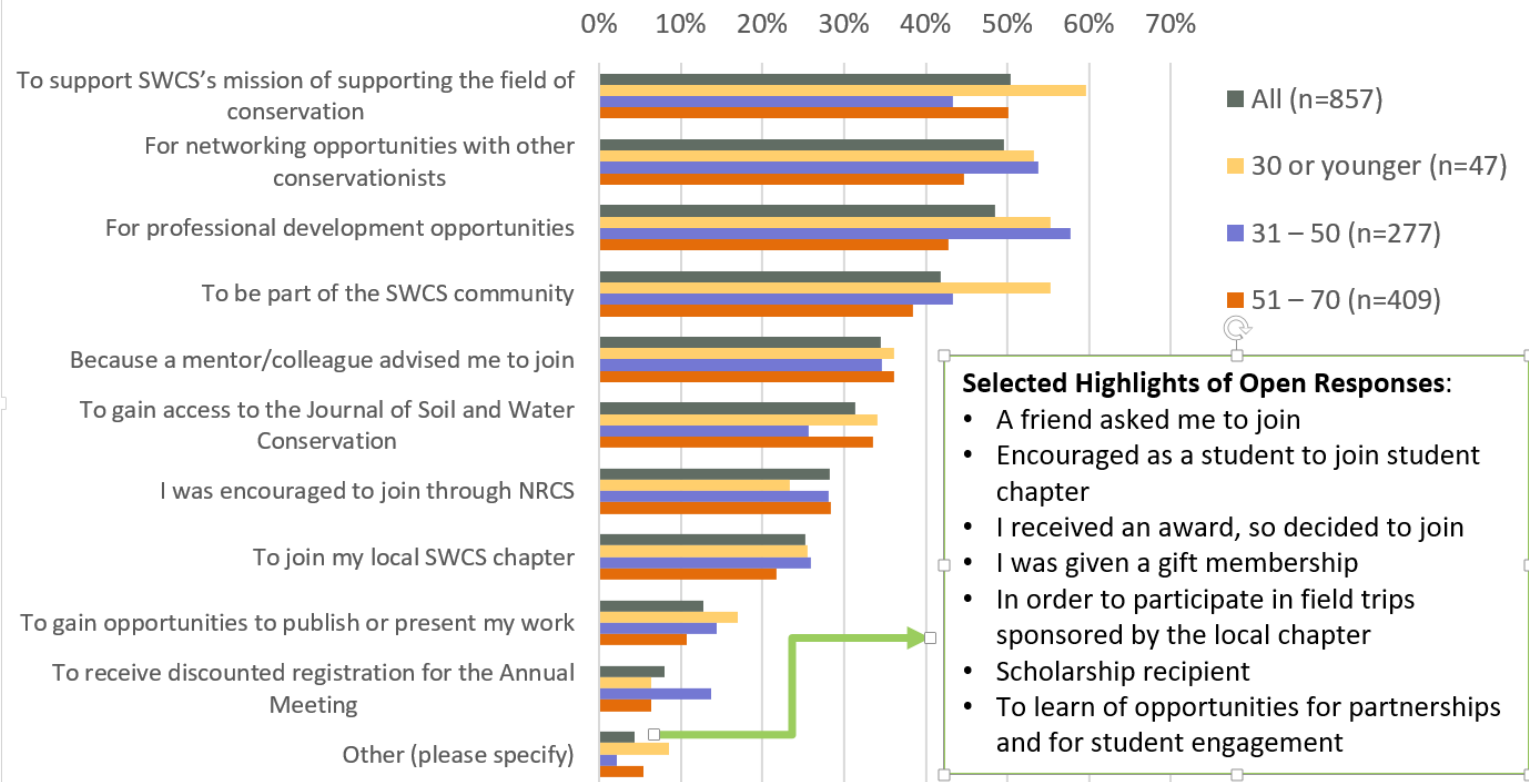
## #2 Key Finding: Refocus on Impact

**Impact aligns with  
the top reasons  
members joined!**

### Top reasons for joining: to support the mission, for networking, and for professional development

Why did you originally join SWCS?

Please select all the factors that influenced your decision. (n=857)



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Page 16

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## #3 Key Finding: Importance of Storytelling and Connection

- Sharing personal and collective stories is critical
- Telling and listening to stories creates empathy and helps people find the things they have in common, which then eases the formation of enduring groups and networks.
- Create new spaces for recognition, reconnection, conversation, and debate.
- 24% to 33% of 2021 survey respondents were simply unaware of current SWCS offerings – Make it known!

## #3 Key Finding: Importance of Storytelling and Connection

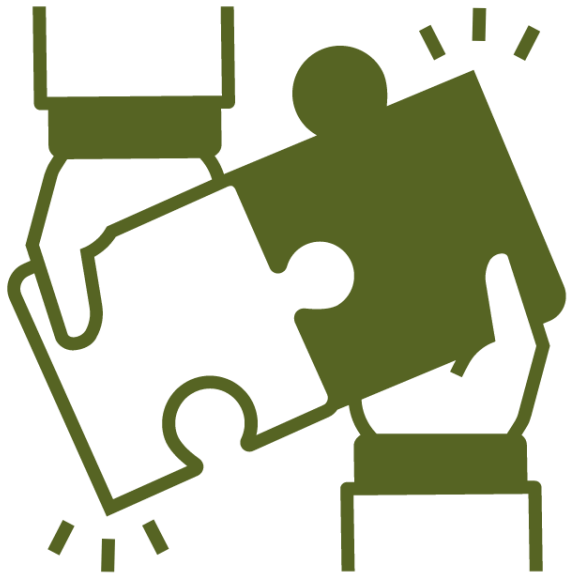
- Need to provide multiple opportunities for connection
- Consistent contact is essential in any social capital initiative so that people encounter one another in multiple settings and contexts
- This reinforces a sense of reciprocal obligation and extends the boundaries of empathy in the community





# Working Together to Build the Future of SWCS

- Laid out the value and impact of local communities/chapters
- SWCS Headquarters and chapters together desire to:



- Bring in the next generation of conservation professionals as SWCS members and leaders to shape the future of their professional society and evolve the chapter model
- From survey, the #1 thing chapter leaders wanted was to ***partner with Headquarters on an activity***

# Mentorship + Ambassadorship = Emerging Leaders!

**SWCS**

## EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

*Grow your career,  
grow the conservation  
movement.*



[www.swcs.org/growconservation](http://www.swcs.org/growconservation)



# We Need Your Help!

Assist us in recruiting Emerging Leaders Program applicants by promoting the program in your state! Applications due August 16.

Promotional Toolkit: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-Hu084qzcuBGMiLuG1vfr7QeKQ-V7G9x?usp=sharing>

- Promotional Flyer
- Personal Outreach Tips
- Template Email
- Template Newsletter Article
- Template Social Media Posts and Graphic

Application link, program information, and a draft schedule are available at [www.swcs.org/growconservation](http://www.swcs.org/growconservation)



**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”**

**- Margaret Mead**



**Discussion and Idea Sharing!**



# References

- Putnam, R. (1995). Tuning In, Turning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 28(4):664–683.  
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- Putnam, R. (2001). *Bowling Alone*. Simon & Schuster.
- Putnam, R.D., and L. Feldstein. (2009). *Better together: Restoring the American community*. Simon & Schuster.