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Texas Nonprofit Fights Social Isolation With Unusual But Successful Strategy

Austin, TX: A pioneering organization in Texas has a 12-year head start on the U.S. Surgeon General's recent [health advisory](#) designed to fight the country's epidemic of isolation and loneliness—conditions linked with inflammation, depression, insomnia, and higher risks of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, addiction, suicide, and dementia.

[Partners in Hope — Texas](#) (PIH) is a nonprofit ministry in Central Texas that empowers communities to eliminate social isolation and the hopelessness it causes. Founded in 2011, the organization has connected hundreds of isolated people with ongoing community support through unique partnerships with local churches, other nonprofits, and volunteers.

Rather than serving those who suffer from isolation as a one-time transaction to meet specific needs (like providing food or counseling), Partners in Hope takes the unusual step of encouraging these "clients" to sign a one-year contract to focus on life goals, while PIH staff members make the commitment to an ongoing relationship. During that period and beyond, the nonprofit strategically connects clients with a customized network of individuals, groups, and resources. This continuous flow of connections often changes the trajectories of their lives, transforming them into active members of their neighborhoods and communities.

In May 2023, U.S. Surgeon General [Dr. Vivek Murthy](#) issued a report addressing the health crisis surrounding isolation and provided the framework for a National Strategy to Advance Social Connection.

"Given the profound consequences of loneliness and isolation," Murthy stated, "we have an opportunity, and an obligation, to make the same investments in addressing social connection that we have made in addressing tobacco use, obesity, and the addiction crisis. We are called to build a movement to mend the social fabric of our nation."

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Partners in Hope has already developed a proven model to help achieve that goal and create a culture of connection. One example of its success involves a woman named Sarah, a widow who was becoming increasingly isolated in her deteriorating home. She agreed to let PIH staff and volunteers be part of her journey to start interacting with more people in the community. Sarah now has connections to a small group at a local church, whose members helped clean up her yard, rebuild a fence, and give her a badly needed washer and dryer. They also connected her to the church's grief recovery support group.

Today, Sarah regularly participates in events through Partners in Hope, including women's coffee gatherings, fellowship dinners, and community workdays. Through her job at a convenience store, she has helped PIH connect with others in the area who are isolated and need support. With greater confidence and new friends, she is now on a path to healing.

"We were thrilled to see the Surgeon General's report about the vital importance of social connection," said [Matt Peacock](#), Executive Director of Partners in Hope — Texas. "It definitely confirms our mission and reinforces the work we've been doing for more than a decade. Most importantly, it inspires us to continue sharing our approach with communities nationwide that want to create a culture of connection and help their residents fight the devastating effects of social isolation."

Peacock has written an award-winning book about the nonprofit's innovative tactics and success stories called [Unexpected Connections](#) (available on Amazon), and he frequently presents [training workshops](#) to organizations interested in adopting relational ministry and social connection strategies. "Our mission is two-pronged," added Peacock. "We don't just help our isolated neighbors; we also encourage and empower individuals and organizations within communities to walk with those who need life-giving connection."

Partners in Hope — Texas is a 501(c)(3) faith-based organization located in Austin, Texas. It is currently establishing connections and building relationships with individuals in Central Texas, with a particular focus on the Lake Travis, Cedar Park, and Leander areas. (www.pihtx.org)

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