



Kansas PRIDE Newsletter

Winter 2008

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Leadership Lessons from PRIDE Communities

Recently I interviewed two PRIDE community mayors for a class assignment. The focus of this interview was on shared leadership. Much of the published leadership material emphasizes the value of shared leadership for successful public efforts. This interview was a way to test published leadership concepts against the actual experience of community leaders. I've summarized some of the interview insights below.

On Shared Leadership

Both mayors shared that they seek out others and ask them to take leadership on projects. It was generally agreed that it was important to both of them to use their position of authority to influence others to be involved. Both mentioned that alone, they were ineffective, but with the support and shared resources of others, that they were amazed at what could be accomplished.

On Shared Goals

Both emphasized the importance of taking on projects that are based on widely shared needs or community supported projects. One noted the importance of establishing goals in a community forum and noted how the group itself tended to keep the focus on projects that had community support (and served the public good). The other noted that often change relied on someone not being afraid to step forward and offer ideas and to encourage change. With willing followers, it can become the leaders role to suggest ideas for change. Often community change needs someone

to challenge the status quo and offer creative ideas. It is important to create a safe environment for people to share ideas without criticism. Once the idea is initiated, it is important to recruit support from others. Both mayors agreed unanimous support was unrealistic, but the broader the public support, the better.

On Shared Responsibility

One mayor noted that once an idea was decided upon, that, as the mayor, it was her role to defend it and take responsibility for it if things went wrong. In doing so, she was able to create a safe environment for followers. Both acknowledged that sharing the credit helped to keep others involved, maintain momentum, and reward those that were invested in the community.

Shared leadership in both of these communities was evident through several indicators. These shared leadership indicators include: the creation of an open, supportive atmosphere for public involvement, purposeful invitations to other to become involved; respectful listening to public opinion and ideas; and willingness to share responsibility and investment in projects.

From the experience of these community leaders, it was evident that shared leadership is important to sustained community improvement efforts. The way each mayor supported others did vary by community, but both work effectively with others in the public environment to encourage shared leadership and create positive change.

Dan Kahl

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Livable Communities

In larger cities across the nation, city planners and developers are beginning to incorporate the elements of older, small towns into newer developments to make them more “livable.” Their design elements include smaller, lively downtown areas that are close to residences, streets designed for walking and biking, and access to public spaces and other natural amenities that encourage a healthy lifestyle and provide a high quality of life.

Below are just a few design elements that make communities more livable:

- Compact and pedestrian-friendly to allow residents to walk to shops, services, cultural resources, and jobs to reduce traffic congestion and benefit people's health.
- Mixed use downtown areas with stores, offices, and housing units above shops
- Locations of services that support pedestrian access and provide opportunities for walking on errands.
- People-friendly streets with shops and businesses that front directly to sidewalks. Neighborhood houses that present front rooms and porches, rather than a line of garages, onto the streets.
- Giving people the option of walking, biking, and using public transit, in addition to driving to school or work, to reduce traffic, protect the environment, and encourage physical activity.
- Provide welcoming, well-defined public places that stimulate face-to-face interaction, encourage civic participation, and provide a place to gather for public events.
- Neighborhoods and parks that create a “sense of place”, lend a unique character, enhance the walking environment, and create pride in the community.
- Healthy environmental resources and natural landscapes, which maintain a balance of nature, open spaces, farms, and wildlife habitat which are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.

As you can see, many of the above design elements help people be closer to the services they need, provide more opportunities for walking and

biking, and create an environment for outdoor recreation, exercise, and interaction with neighbors and fellow citizens. Parks and natural amenities such as rivers and lakes, provide those outdoor spaces important to a healthy lifestyle. Livable communities provide settings that encourage citizens to get out and be in the community and the natural environment.

Healthy natural resources are an integral part of livable communities. The Healthy Ecosystems-Healthy Communities (HEHC) program helps communities explore ways to use, preserve, and protect the local natural resources and open spaces that make their community more livable. Working together, community members can create a vision of what they want their community to be and then develop plans for that future. Assessing your resources and planning for their use and sustainability are the first important steps to preserving what you value in your community.

How can the HEHC process be used to make a community more livable? One community in the HEHC program is currently using their water quality mini-grant to build a trail along a river in their community. Although the trail will be used to promote the awareness and importance of local water quality, it also invites citizens to:

- walk and bicycle for recreation and exercise
- participate in fishing, birding and watching local wildlife
- have picnics and small gatherings

In addition, this community's HEHC work has led to another grant to help them develop health and exercise programs to get their citizens out of their homes and onto the “trail” for a healthier community.

The Healthy Ecosystems-Healthy Communities program will soon be accepting new communities. The HEHC project coordinator can come to your community to visit with your PRIDE group and community representatives about how the HEHC program and its benefits your community. Call Sherry Davis, at (785) 532-3039, for more details.

PRIDE Sponsor Spotlight — Southern Kansas Telephone

Southern Kansas Telephone Company, Inc. (SKT) was founded in 1940. It has been owned and operated by the Mikesell family since its founding. The company provides the latest in telecommunications products and services to more than 5,000 rural telephone customers and 3,000 cable and internet customers in seven counties of south central Kansas. SKT is headquartered in Clearwater, Kansas with additional customer service locations in Belle Plaine and Independence.

Like many rural telephone companies, SKT's roots began in telephone service. Cable television services were offered in Clearwater and three other communities in the late 1970s. This network was expanded in 1998 through the acquisition of 10 additional communities.

Dial-up Internet service was first offered as an option to all telephone customers in 1998 as well. In 2000, the company expanded its dial-up Internet service to five additional Kansas communities and also began offering high-speed Internet service. Wireless cell phone service was added in 2006 through a partnership with Pioneer Wireless. In addition to nationwide coverage, SKT's wireless service takes advantage of new towers presently being built throughout southern Kansas to provide cell phone service to rural areas that have traditionally received little or no coverage.

In addition to offering quality telecommunications service, SKT and the Mikesell family are committed to helping communities they serve with Community and Economic Development efforts. Lonnie Stieben has served as Community and Economic Development Manager at SKT since May 2002. A rural Kansas background, along with a previous career in rural banking, helps Stieben to understand the issues facing the rural towns SKT serves.



Working with community development is not an exact science and takes time and effort. "I find that an important first step in getting communities to work together is by starting community conversations that build trust—especially when it involves working with neighboring communities that are old high school rivalries," Stieben says. "Too often it takes some motivating force — like a major crisis or outside threat — to get a community to come together. The Kansas PRIDE program is an excellent way to get community volunteers working together to build trust. Evidence of community pride is vital to rural community survival. PRIDE also helps to build on quality of life amenities that can help slow the exporting of one of our most valuable assets — young people. It is important that

work continues that makes our communities attractive for our young people. We need to do whatever necessary to encourage their return home after post-secondary education or technical training. Our work also needs to encourage charitable donations to community foundations with a focus on funding initiatives designed to slow the transfer of young people and wealth from rural communities — an unfortunate transfer that has been occurring since the late 60s.

With this in mind, The Mikesell Family Foundation was established in 2002 to provide charitable donations to communities served by SKT. A major focus of the foundation is to assist SKT communities with quality-of-life enhancements, community leadership development, and innovative educational and technological initiatives. The foundation especially gives preference to the matching of its own grants by other charitable gifts made by outside grantees and/or other Family or Community Foundations.

For complete information on the SKT family of companies, or more information on SKT's products and services, visit the company's web site at www.SKTCcompanies.com.

Awards and Recognitions

Web Cast

Why is it that your community is not applying for the Community of Excellence Award or Star Award? Is it because you are not quite sure where to begin? Each community has youth that should be recognized for their contributions to community, yet those individuals are not being nominated.

Recognitions and awards are an important part of the community development experience. They provide a time to celebrate successes and to recognize individuals that have helped to make your community a better place to live and work.

Let's get together in front of your computer and learn more about how to write award-winning applications on February 12 at 6:30 p.m. Technology will allow this workshop to be brought to you via your home computer. Evaluators will be on hand to discuss how you can present your community, projects, or youth recognition nominations in the best way to make sure that deserving applications are recognized by evaluators. All you will have to do is join us at the following Web site on February 12 at <http://connect.oznet.ksu.edu/pride/> More information and an agenda of items to be covered will be mailed and e-mailed around February 1.

Keep Kansas Clean So Our PRIDE Can Be Seen

Many communities are currently cleaning up tree branches as a result of winter ice and snow storms. This may be an unplanned cleanup activity, but one that is needed to keep communities safe and utilities working.

Now is the time to begin planning your spring cleanup. This will be our second annual "Keep Kansas Clean So Our PRIDE Can Be Seen" campaign. As a result of evaluations that were received from our first campaign, it was learned that many communities have a scheduled yearly event and that we should increase the time for scheduling and reporting.

The 2008 activity will be scheduled for March through May. Pick the date and cleanup activity and put the numbers together and show what PRIDE communities can accomplish. Recognition will take place at our annual PRIDE Day. Watch your mailbox as forms will be sent to collect information about your community cleanup. For more information on planning a community cleanup visit the PRIDE Web site at www.kansasprideprogram.com and download the publication *Conducting a Community Clean-Up, Fix-Up Campaign*, MF-931. We are looking forward to hearing more about your scheduled cleanup activity.

PRIDE Communities Awarded "Get It — Do It!" Grants

Congratulations to seven PRIDE groups and Extension agents that have been awarded "Get It — Do It!" funds through K-State Research and Extension's Partnerships for a Healthier Kansas. Grants totaling more than \$21,000 have been awarded to:

Stafford PRIDE

Jeanette Hildebrand, Chair
Glenn Newdigger, Stafford County Extension Agent

Kinsley PRIDE

Vicky Haskell, Chair
Andrea Wood, Edwards County Extension Agent

Melvern PRIDE

Darrel Schultz, Chair
Fran Richmond, Osage County Extension Agent

Portis PRIDE

Kristie Haug, Chair
Nadine Sigle, Osborne County Extension Agent

Basehor PRIDE

Charles Wilderson, Chair
Denise Sullivan, Leavenworth County Extension Agent

Olsburg PRIDE

Peggy Johnson, Chair
Angela Abts, Pottawatomie County Extension Agent

Glasco PRIDE

Dr. Claude Harwood, Chair
Pat Gernardt, Cloud County Extension Agent

Funds will be used to promote adult and youth physical activity through:

- the development of walking trails,
- establishment of walking/biking/activity clubs,
- the implementation of TV/screen-time reduction campaigns, and
- promotional events intended to improve access to physical activity places (e.g., walking trails, tracks, neighborhood sidewalks).

The seven communities and their Extension colleagues begin planning project details in January, 2008 and are expected to launch community activities that coincide with the 2008 Walk Kansas program (March 9 - May 3).

Community News

The City of Lansing has had a “Welcome to Lansing” sign over the years, however due to utility construction, the sign was demolished 5 or 6 years ago. The Lansing PRIDE committee felt it needed to be revitalized and reinstated. The concept this time included adding community organization logos. Upon inquiry, it was determined that it was going to take more than \$1,000 to get erected, even with volunteer labor and skills. Each potential community organization was contacted and asked if they would provide a copy of their logo, and contribute \$100 toward the overall cost.

There was an excellent response, and the City of Lansing offered to cover anything not covered by the

organizations. Applications for state and city permits were generated, and the final touches were put in place in late June. With all the excitement the sign was generating, the Mayor, council, and representatives from each of the organizations met for a last and final picture taking event. Lansing is proud to have a large red community sign at the edge of town announcing “The City with a Future.” There is now talk of adding recognition to the sign that Lansing was recently named one of the top 100 cities in the United States with fewer than 50,000 residents by Money Magazine.

John Bennett
Chairman, Lansing PRIDE



Picture taking session with representatives of the city and organizations.



Application of logo signs, with Forrest Holdeman and Gene Young doing some work.

Community News

On Saturday, November 17, Melvern PRIDE served more than 350 free Thanksgiving dinners to people from Melvern and surrounding communities. Much of the food was donated from area grocery stores. More than 20 Melvern PRIDE volunteers helped prepare and serve the Thanksgiving dinner. Several students from Marais de Cygnes Valley High School volunteered to carry trays of food to the tables and kept the water glasses full. Turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, and pie were the main food for the meal. A few “carry out” meals were also provided to the elderly who were unable to attend. This is the 4th annual free Thanksgiving dinner served by Melvern PRIDE.

On October 27, Melvern PRIDE held an outdoor jubilee in the hills just north of Melvern. This jubilee was called “Autumn Fest.” Entertainers from

surrounding communities provided 4 hours of gospel, country, and bluegrass music in the great outdoors. Funnel cakes, sandwiches, sundaes, hot dogs, and many other food items were sold to those who attended. A stage was decorated with pumpkins, flowers, corn stalks, and other festive material. A “barn front” was built to set on stage for the background for the entertainers. The “Autumn Fest” was attended by area people.

Earlier in the day a craft festival was held in Melvern and a free hayrack ride to the haunted house was provided. Many youth and adults rode the 4 hayracks that traveled to the haunted house. Hot chocolate and cookies were provided by Melvern PRIDE following the hayrack ride.

Submitted by Jim Irey – Melvern PRIDE



Community members enjoy food and fellowship at the community Thanksgiving dinner.



Performers at Autumn Fest.



Craft festival before Autumn Fest.

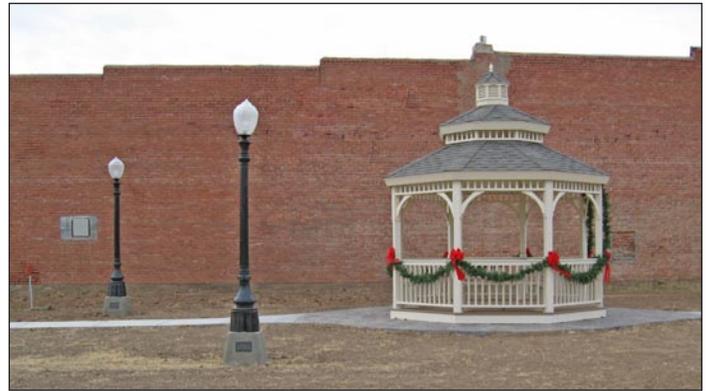


A crowd enjoys the performers at Autumn Fest.

Community News

Cunningham PRIDE continues to strive to beautify! The latest project has been the conversion of a narrow, vacant lot on Main Street into the third city park. This park is known as the Dafforn Park in memory of the donors. It is graced by a gazebo with decorative lighting and connecting sidewalks. PRIDE members will complete this project in the spring of 2008 when they plant shrubs and flowers.

Two other city parks exist, on the ¼ block area on which the water tower stands, the other being the 4-block, manicured city park encircled by a walking path and further enhanced by many young and mature trees, with attractions such as a football field, a baseball diamond, a swimming pool, a sand volleyball court, and playground equipment.



New gazebo at Dafforn Park.

K-State Reviews Reasons to Save, Remove Damaged Trees

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Many communities in northeast Kansas suffered tree damage in a December 2007 ice storm. Communities will face decisions about whether to remove or try to save trees damaged in December’s ice storms.

Middle-aged and younger trees that were healthy and vigorous before winter hit can lose up to half of their crown to ice and still make a surprisingly swift comeback, according to horticulturists with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

That half includes any pruning repairs, as well as the branches Mother Nature downed.

The horticulturists suggest the following, however, as situations in which tree removal may be the only good option:

- Half or more of the tree’s canopy is gone or will be after surgical pruning.
- The bark is split, exposing the cambium – the layer between bark and wood that produces the tree’s new cells.
- The main trunk is split – which typically brings tree death, although the demise may drag on over time.

- The placement or number of broken limbs has destroyed the overall form of the tree. How the tree looks will be important to the homeowner’s enjoyment. But, if it has or (after pruning) will become lopsided, it may be much more vulnerable to future weather damage.



Tree damaged by the December 2007 ice storms in northeast Kansas.

- All of the main branches were or will need to be pruned back, so that only stubs are left – a practice called topping. Normally, new branches will arise from such stubs, although they’ll often grow in “witch’s broom” form. They won’t be as firmly attached as the original branches, though, so probably will break in other storms.

The K-State horticulturists warn that because developing so many new branches requires lots of energy, topped trees also are less able to fight off the effects of insects, disease, drought, and storms. The typical end result is a shorter life span.

Story courtesy of K-State Research and Extension News Unit

PRIDE Calendar

January

- 15 2nd quarter report due
- 18 PRIDE Inc. Board Meeting 10 a.m. Topeka

February

- 8 - 9 Get It – Do It Workshop TBA
- 12 Webcast Workshop on Better Award Application 6:30 p.m.

March through May

Keep Kansas Clean So Our PRIDE Can Be Seen Campaign

April

- 15 3rd quarter report due
Request for Community of Excellence Evaluation
- 18 PRIDE, Inc Board Meeting TBA
- 18-19 Get It- Do It Workshop Rock Springs 4-H Camp

May

- 1 STAR Award Due
Youth Awards Due

July

- 15 4th quarter report due



All educational programs and materials are available without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability.

The Kansas Department of Commerce, K-State Research and Extension, and private-sector companies and associations partner together to make the PRIDE program successful.

For assistance contact the PRIDE staff: Jeanne Stinson (785) 296-3485;
Dan Kahl or Connie Hoch at (785) 532-5840