

Dakotafire

Plus:
**COULD YOU
BE MAYOR
IN FIVE
YEARS?**
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DIGGING DEEP

**Doland residents band together
to move community forward**

Page 31

Margot Gillette, Amy Hofer, LeAnne Bawek, Craig Schroeder, Bonnie Wagner and Dwight Lyren are among those working to make a difference in Doland, S.D.

INTRODUCING

PIE

PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

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**CHANGING MINDSETS /
BUILDING LEADERSHIP**

TWO TOPICS IN ONE ISSUE!

PUBLISHER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Heidi Marttila-Losure, heidi@dakotafire.net

STAFF WRITER

Wendy Royston, wendy@dakotafire.net

CONTRIBUTORS

Elizabeth "Sam" Grosz, Bill Krikac, Doug Card, Peter Carrels, Sarah Gackle, Jamie Horter, Ken Schmierer

SALES & MARKETING DIRECTOR

Laura Ptacek, laura@dakotafire.net

EDITORIAL OFFICE

P.O. Box 603, Frederick, SD 57441
605-290-3335

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Dakotafire is sparking a revival in rural communities of the Dakotas and beyond by encouraging conversations that help rural residents rethink what's happening and what's possible.

Learn more at www.dakotafire.net.

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Fostering leadership



HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

Editor's note: You're going to read a lot about leadership in the following pages, and I hope the conversation continues in your communities after you've put this magazine down and moved on to action. In this space, I'm going to practice a leadership skill I am trying to develop in myself: knowing when to delegate.

*This editorial was written as a result of a one-evening experiment in magazine design: We pulled together some creative people and asked them to work with us to shape this issue. One of those creative individuals, **Jamie Horter** of Lyons, Neb., and formerly of Bristol, S.D., wrote this guest editorial.*

➔ Editor Heidi Marttila-Losure can be reached at heidi@dakotafire.net.

JAMIE HORTER

Rural towns have populations of people who care deeply about their local communities. In order to maintain thriving communities, locals must be cultivated to serve as leaders.

Those of us in rural places know that finding the leaders we need is often difficult, but short-term, urgent projects show the capacity of locals to assume leadership positions.

For example, the residents of Doland recently raised \$65,000 for a new gym floor so that they could retain their home games (page 31). Similar issue-based fundraising campaigns across rural communities are able to be

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Leadership locally

successful because of the individuals who rise to the challenge. Whether it's hosting a benefit for a neighbor in need, raising money for the community food bank or hosting a drive for needed infrastructure, the success of these projects depends on each person who takes initiative.

Those who step up make short-term campaigns a success. Similarly, leadership is vital to guide long-term initiatives. Long-term leadership often poses the greater challenge in rural communities. How do communities foster continuing leadership, and what are the first steps?

The most recent Prairie Idea Exchange event (read more about that project on page 4) focused on building leadership in rural communities. Rural economic developers gathered in December in Aberdeen, S.D., to share the challenges they face in their communities and some ideas on how communities can build their leadership base.

These community professionals noted that short-term projects have the best odds of finding leaders and volunteers. The chances of finding willing leaders becomes more difficult when ongoing leadership is needed. Decades-long uncontested mayoral races—which are not unusual in many Dakota small towns—exemplify the lack of willing candidates to serve, and support a narrative that stepping up to serve is a life sentence.

Despite these current challenges, communities can be proactive in turning a lack of leadership into a thriving base of individuals ready to serve.

Building leadership begins with looking to the community and noting which individuals could be engaged. Those who have volunteered in short-term campaigns are a good place to start.

Also important is asking if anyone is missing from the conversation. People may not make their talents known if they don't know what is needed. Finding good candidates starts with building relationships and being vocal about what services are needed.

PIE participants noted that a lack of leadership training can be the bottleneck to cultivating leaders. The way to healthy leadership transition may rest in the ability of current leaders to mentor future leaders and explain what a position entails. Specific strategies for developing leaders are listed on page 26.

Communities can resolve the issue of leadership gaps by developing leaders now. Encouraging and training local leaders today will provide a prepared group of citizen leaders ready to tackle tomorrow's needs. *

Clarification: The Nov/Dec issue of Dakotafire should have stated that Dr. Tom Dean is employed by Horizon Health Care in Wessington Springs.

Dakotafire coverage area and points of interest from this issue.



Pull up a chair!

Time to have a taste of

Prairie Idea Exchange
is a way to share fruitful, community-building ideas
across northeastern South Dakota and beyond
through conversations among economic
development professionals, community journalists
and the region's residents
in person, in print and online.

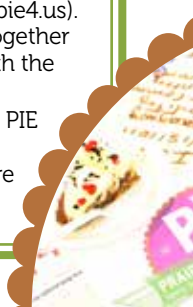
Prairie Idea Exchange
is generously supported by the Bush Foundation
through a Community Innovation Grant
and is being managed through a partnership
between GROW South Dakota and Dakotafire Media, LLC.

The ingredients needed to make PIE fantastic:

- 1 roomful** of rural economic development professionals, gathering quarterly to share their knowledge and success stories.
- 5 topics** (preferably juicy or spicy) that invite lots of interesting conversation.
- 1 or 2** facilitators to help stir the discussion.
- A pinch** of systems-thinking principles to make sure the ideas don't fall flat.
- 1 network** of community journalists ready to add reporting from their communities to the juicy topics.
- 1** magazine (available in print and online) that can provide a well-researched, well-designed space for the ideas that the PIE makers create.
- More than 45,000** households in northeastern South Dakota and beyond to take in the fruit of the PIE conversations.
- 5** gatherings, scattered across the region, where community members can add a variety of flavors to the conversation.
- 1** website (www.pie4.us) where the region can connect to cook up even more cool ideas.

The method to the PIE magic:

Bring together an established network of economic professionals (the Northeast South Dakota Regional Economic Developers) for an afternoon of conversation after their regular regional meetings. Have a facilitator direct the conversation around a specific topic, stirring so that particularly fruitful ideas emerge. Have Dakotafire's network of community journalists add some insights from local and regional experts, plus reporting from the region's communities. Create interesting content, in the form of stories, photos and graphics, that help to foster understanding of those fruitful ideas. Put those ideas in *Dakotafire* magazine and send them out to about 45,000 community-minded households in the region. Host events in a variety of communities in the region and invite community members to give their own input on the ideas shared in the magazine. Serve actual pie. Invite community members to continue the conversation online (www.pie4.us). Record a video that can give people from elsewhere a taste of PIE. Put together one more serving of PIE on the chosen topic in *Dakotafire* magazine, with the input from the community included. Repeat four more times, using a different topic each time. Recognize that PIE makers will get better with practice, and they will start to work and think more as a team. Revise the recipe as needed to make the result even more satisfying. Enjoy the spicy, fruitful PIE!



How this issue came together: PIE & pizza

We've now held two Prairie Idea Exchange gatherings—one in September, focused on mindset, and the second in December, where leadership was the topic.

In the spirit of the Community Innovation Grant that is covering the costs of this project, these events are, in several ways, experiments: As we try out different ideas in conversation, we're also trying out different ways of holding conversations—especially as we figure out how best to harvest those ideas and share them with you in the following pages.

After the second PIE event, we decided to try yet another experiment: **What would happen if we brought together a group of creative people—some of them journalists, but many of them not—to plan the magazine and develop the content?** In one evening? Subsisting on pizza and leftover pie?

Well, some parts of our Dakotafire Design Night experiment worked; others didn't. The process was messy, exhausting—and a whole lot of fun.

We hope you enjoy the result!



We asked the people who helped put this issue together at Dakotafire Design Night to answer this question. If you'd like to answer it as well, go to www.pie4.us.

What is a leader?



**PAULA
JENSEN**

*funds development
director,
Grow South Dakota*



A leader is a person who moves an idea forward into action."



**HEIDI
MARTTILA-LOSURE**

*publisher & editor,
Dakotafire Media*



Leaders use whatever resources they have to make their corner of the world a better place. When they come to the limit of those resources, leaders build up the people on either side, so those neighbors are better able to use their own resources to do the work they are called to do. Those neighbors build up neighbors, who build up neighbors. Eventually those empowering ripples could reach around the world."



takes action
courageous
gathers people
patient
asks questions



**JASON
UPHOFF**

*executive director of
the Arlington Community
Development Corporation*



Leadership is right action, born of sound judgment, that motivates others to make communities better. What distinguishes between leaders and followers? One word: sleep."



**JOE
BARTMANN**

*process host &
community coach,
Rural Weaver LLC*



To me, our best leaders have the courage to speak up and ask the powerful questions of us. They are patient enough to sit through good learning as a not-knower, and empathic enough to listen to all the voices. They also see connections and relationships that seem to be hidden from view, and because of that, they help us break through worldviews and assumptions that are holding us back."



learner
empathic
assumption breaker
resourceful
intuitive
lets go of control
humble

Photo of Joe Bartmann by Abby Bischoff, Flock Studio

inspiring
visionary
steps up
create buy-in
mentors others
sleep
motivator
sound judgment
decides
discontent



**JAMIE
HORTER**

*rural community
developer & artist*

“ A leader gathers people around a common vision and knows when to move forward or change course to manage projects to completion. A leader does not cling to a project for personal elevation, but rather knows when to hand off ownership in order to create the best results.”



**LIZ
HANNUM**

*coordinator for the Center of
Excellence in Entrepreneurship
and International Business
Northern State University*

“ Great leaders take action, inspire others, create buy-in and mentor future leaders.”



**WENDY
ROYSTON**

*staff writer,
Dakotafire Media*

“ A leader is someone who sees the need of a friend or neighbor or the entire community and isn't content to sit silently and watch. A leader steps up and becomes a part of the solution, helping plan and implement the work that is necessary to better the situation and inspires others to do the same.”



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We did actually launch a pie—but just a toy one. Who'd waste a real pie?



Joe Bartmann introduces the idea of possibility thinking.



LAUNCH!

OBJECTIVE: CHANGING MINDSETS

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE & WENDY ROYSTON

As we look to the future for our rural communities, one thing is certain: What lies ahead is not going to be the same as what came before. Change is inevitable.

Will that change be good, or will it be bad? It could go either way. But at least some of that direction is within our control, suggested Joe Bartmann, facilitator for the first Prairie Idea Exchange event, held Sept. 10 in Aberdeen, S.D.

“By changing the way we think about change, we change the way we act, which changes the trends and ultimately the events that will happen,” said Bartmann, process host and community coach of Rural Weaver, LLC.

Bartmann invited the economic development professionals in the room to ask themselves and one another tough questions to challenge mental models that aren’t productive.

“Sometimes what happens when we feel like we’re stuck, when we feel like ... we’re spinning our wheels no matter what kind of resources and effort and time we put into it,” he said, “what’s actually keeping us stuck is what I would call ‘limiting beliefs’—beliefs that limit our possibilities.”

Bartmann, who lives in a small town and works with rural communities all over the state, gave two examples of limiting beliefs that are common in rural places: *Success is for someone else, somewhere else.* And: *Success is getting our community to look like it did 50 years ago.*

“Without realizing it, people in our communities put on our blinders for possibility because we can only imagine our community the way it used to be,” Bartmann said.

The goal is to recognize limiting beliefs, put them aside and practice the opposite: possibility thinking.

What if we assume that we already have everything required to make our communities the kind of communities we want them to be? It’s not somewhere else. There’s not somebody with a magic wand who is going to show up and fix things,” Bartmann said. **“We have it. It’s possible.”**

At the PIE event, several participants were invited to share a time when a change in thinking—setting aside a prevailing idea of what was possible, and opening hearts and minds to a different possibility—resulted in a success in the community. Those listening to the stories were then asked to describe the factors that they heard in the stories that changed mindsets and led to those successes.

Here are some of the stories they shared. (Doland’s story was also told at the event; read about its successes on p. 31.)

EUREKA, S.D.

POSSIBILITY: Involving all ages

Some in the Eureka community thought one of their problems was that younger adults had no interest in community involvement. Learning they were wrong was a turning point.

In January 2014, each of the seven members of the Eureka Community Development Co. board of directors decided to invite five younger adults to the table and ask for their feedback on community happenings.

"Nothing was really happening, so we decided to find out what the community wanted," said Wanda Jundt, executive director.

"When we had that meeting, they said, 'Thank you for inviting us—we really do want to be involved,'" she recalled. "It was really eye-opening for us, because what we were hearing around town wasn't what was true—they wanted to be involved. ... They wanted to take things into their own hands and do things their own way and not be micromanaged and just do it, and they have done it."

The group of younger members of the community has become known as the Eureka Ambassadors since that meeting a year ago, organizing such events as holiday fairs, Halloween "spook houses," a community volleyball league and laser tag events.

The Eureka Community Development Co. was so happy with the result of its invitation to younger residents that it later applied for a Bush Foundation grant, which has allowed the company to make some of the ideas that came forward a reality, including a job fair, customer service training and

an upcoming financial advising course.

The organization also now is reaching out to Eureka's graduates as they attend college, inviting them back to the community by sending them care packages during times when they typically would not receive them. In addition to locally made goodies, the packages include letters from the city, Chamber of Commerce and the economic development group, as well as any professionals in that alumnus' chosen field of study.

"(We tell them.) 'We want you to come home, whether it's when you're done with college or technical school, or when you have a family, or maybe it won't be until you retire. This is still your home, and we want you to come back,'" Jundt said. "It's just to let them know that we're thinking of them, and that someday we want to have them back."

The concept began after a speaker at a conference pointed out that small towns "don't go out of our way to tell our graduates we want them back, but ... we for sure want (them) back, and we need (them) here," said Jundt. "That's the message we're trying to send."

And the group hopes Eureka's graduates will utilize what they have learned—to "start with yes."

"Don't say it can't be done," Jundt said. "Not everything is going to be possible, but if you start with 'yes,' if it's a 'no,' you explain why and learn from it."

A Champion

Willingness to listen and act

« Factors that helped this story happen



Wanda Jundt, center, tells her story of getting youths involved as Rita Anderson and Joan Sacrison listen and take notes.

Systems: There's more beneath the surface

QUESTION LEVEL:

"What is happening here?"

"What has been happening?"

"Why is it happening this way?"

"Why does this persist?"

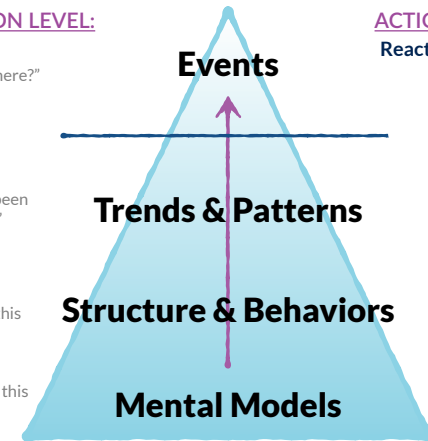
ACTION LEVEL:

React, Quick Fix, Firefight

Anticipate, Forecast

Design, Build

Transform Thinking



Iceberg model adapted from Michael Goodman

In any system, there is almost always a lot more going on than we can easily notice, and so much of the "how" and "why" of what is happening stays hidden from view, like an iceberg. When we try to change the system just by seeing what is obviously happening, we miss most of what is causing that to happen, and end up creating a quick fix that backfires or doesn't solve our problem.

NEW GOAL: If we can address what is beneath the surface—what's actually causing those events—we can make changes in the structures of the system to drive new kinds of action that will create the outcomes we want. **THE KEY:** It turns out that what happens in a human system is driven by thinking—what we believe and how we view the world. We ultimately create change by changing the way we think and challenging what we assume to be true. —Joe Bartmann

POSSIBILITY: A community-built community space

If two heads are better than one, the result of the collaborative hopes and dreams of hundreds is nothing short of amazing.

In just over six weeks, the community of De Smet, S.D., raised just over \$3 million to make the collective vision of most of its 1,000 residents a reality. In early 2012, a local business approached the De Smet Development Corp., asking for a wish list with which it could help, as a thank-you to the community that had supported the business for the past 100 years. Major plans on a “20-year dream plan,” according to Development Coordinator Angie Baszler, included a new community center and a sports complex.

“We currently are having weddings in an old gymnasium with no air conditioning,” Baszler said.

“Just like most small towns, we have weddings with 500-plus people, (so) we needed some sort of

nice venue. ... We also had a track that was not regulation size and a football field that was old.”

With those basic ideas in mind, the group asked for the community’s help, not just in raising funds for the project, but also in figuring out what, exactly, the project would entail. More than 100 people participated in the planning process, and Baszler said that approach paid dividends in raising the necessary funds for the project.

“We really invited people to be partners with us on this project, and share their dreams and visions with us, and then invest in (them),”

she said. “It really took a lot of meetings and a lot of hard work and a lot of volunteer hours to shape this into something really incredible. ... I think that if you’re willing to keep an open mind and try to reach for the stars, you’ll get there.”

Early on, the group decided to raise as many of the funds as possible, to avoid placing the cost burden on taxpayers for the city-owned property. It was decided that financial pledges could be made for specific parts of the project, so residents could see their biggest dreams come to fruition.

“It’s something they’re passionate about, and (you’re) helping them dream big about it,” said Baszler. “We saw young people in our community give at levels that we just never dreamed. They weren’t just giving ... what’s easy. ... It’s helping match their capacity with something they’re passionate about.”

The fact that millions were raised in a community of 1,000 that also was in the midst of a refurbishing fundraiser at the local hospital was beyond the economic development corporation’s wildest dreams.

“When we sat around that table (for the initial planning meeting), we thought there’s no way we’d come up with even \$2 million ... (but) we said, ‘Let’s try it anyway,’” she recalled.

In November 2012, the group secured a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant.

“By the end of 2012, we had raised well over \$1 million, and this thing became possible,” Baszler said.

More than 930 people contributed financially to the project, which includes not only a community center and sports complex, but also a theater, and is set to open in June 2015. The entire 22,837-square-foot complex is situated across the street from the city-owned park, in the heart of De Smet.

“We have this incredible ‘central park’ feel, where during football games, we have kids playing at the



Angie Baszler tells her story of a community coming together to Craig Schroeder, Becky Hubsch and Milan Wall.

Aspirational Shared Vision

Connecting Multiple Projects for added Value

Give Big! (your passion not the \$)



« Factors that helped this story happen

park, or (playing) baseball games or whatever,” said Baszler. “We have this really cool feel that small towns are known for.”

Overcoming obstacles

Although the coming-together of the community to fund something beyond most people in De Smet’s wildest dreams—with a majority of the funds raised in under two months—may seem like a fairy tale, it did not come without a few hiccups. In early 2014, the project went to bid with the assumption that all funds were secured. But the bids came in \$1 million higher than expected.

“We felt like we had raised everything we could possibly raise,” said Baszler. “When you have people giving to different areas within the building, it’s not like you can just cut off one function, because they’re all a very important part of the center, and by cutting that off, you could possibly be cutting off the funding source of that as well.”

So, instead of giving up, the group worked even harder, reducing costs through value-added engineering and finding alternate suppliers for some of the materials. Two days before the City Council was scheduled to approve the project, however, supporters were still \$500,000 short.

“The leaders of our community got together, and within 24 hours ... all but about \$15,000 was raised,” said Baszler. “That last little bit came in right as (Economic Development Director Rita Anderson) was walking into the City Council meeting. She got

one phone call, and then one gentleman at the city council meeting said, ‘I’ll fund the last amount,’ and then the City Council went ahead. The day before, we were all doom and gloom, but the leaders stepped up ... and I think some of them just reached a little deeper in their pockets, because this was a project they were passionate about and they believed in, and they made it happen.”

Without all 931 donors, Baszler said, the De Smet Event & Wellness Center and Sports Complex wouldn’t be set to open in just a few short months, with just a \$500,000 fundraising campaign to

purchase theater seats, wellness center equipment and other furnishings and supplies still to go.

“Every single gift in this mattered,” she said.

“In some ways, the \$1,000 gift was just as important as the \$100,000 gift, because we wanted the entire community to believe that they had a part in this.”



Above: The concept drawing of the De Smet Event & Wellness Center.

Below: The progress on the building, as of September 2014.

Images courtesy Rita Anderson



Churchs & community
came together
for a cause
- Champion
- Buy-in

Moment um arises
to desire not to
let die a community
indicative of
Community desire

« Factors that helped
this story happen

POSSIBILITY: Bringing denominations together

Christian leaders have found that mission work starts with *the Church, not a church*, in Sisseton.

Parents in the town of 2,500 agreed that the youths of the community needed a positive focus, but old-style “denominational segregation” had kept that from happening until a meeting of the Impact World Tour movement in the spring of 2013 aimed to overcome those limitations, and a group of adults banded together to make it happen locally.

“Families of youth were coming to us and saying that we need to do something with our youth,” said Lori Moen, chief operating officer of GrowSD. “They were seeing more signs of frustration ... or lack of activity or lack of involvement in the community. ... We, as parents—or as community leaders—needed to step

up to the plate. ... We just decided that it needed to be done, and (we) ... had to look outside the walls of the church, and look at the walls of the community.”

So, a group of adults from seven Sisseton churches tore down the centuries-old walls that had divided Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists and other churches to discuss nondenominational evangelization efforts toward the community’s youths.

“If we’re truly doing our mission as we say we’re going to do, then we need to let down some of those barriers that we put up. ... The ultimate focus was to bring the Word,” she said.

From those discussions, the group birthed yoUthNITE, a monthly Wednesday evening gathering of Sisseton’s teens for fellowship and informal Christian teaching. Members of the group’s steering committee meet a week in advance of each yoUthNITE to plan that month’s menu, message, music and

entertainment or activity. Feedback from the youths also is considered in making decisions, although the adults have made it clear that some ideas are not permissible. The group meets at the local senior center. And, as an unexpected opportunity, the community’s 20- to 40-year-olds, who typically are not very involved in community action, are taking interest in chaperoning each month’s events.

“Maybe that’s what’s going to help me ... (get) them to become active in town,” Moen said.

She added that the development of yoUthNITE is a reminder of how change tends to happen in rural America.

“You have a few key people in the community who are determined to make that project a success,” she said. “When we’re changing our mindsets, those are pioneering efforts ... looking at some of those ideas that are outside the box.”

That outside-the-box thinking has helped bring Sisseton’s Christian community under one theoretical roof.

“I think they are looking at their beliefs and how they have a lot of similarities,” Moen said.

And the group is committed to continuing its mission.

“If it’s the structure of the organization that’s hindering us from going forward, we’re not going to let that be a hindrance. We’re going to move forward and do our mission,” said Moen. “I have a sign hanging in my office that says, ‘You must make a choice to make a chance, or your world will never change,’ and I think that’s so true.”



David McGirr, second from left, shares a comment on the story shared by Lori Moen, center, as (from left) Janis Dailing, Kellie Ecker and Gary Vetter listen.

ROBERTS, DAY AND MARSHALL COUNTIES, S.D.

POSSIBILITY: Towns working together as a region

Being open, respecting the process

Winning something better → common goal



In the Glacial Lakes region in northeast South Dakota, “community” is defined as more than what lies inside the city limits signs.

“They said, ‘We’ve realized that we’re a community. We’re not seven different communities in three different counties; we are a community,’” said Linda Salmonson, East River Electric’s economic development manager, summarizing the attitudes of local leaders from that area after a leadership workshop about 10 years ago.

During that Leadership Plenty regional workshop, which spanned 10 weeks, 30 individuals from Webster, Sisseton, Britton, Langford, Lake City, Roslyn and Bristol were challenged to work hand in hand, rather than as competitors, for the first few weeks, before facilitators asked them to reorganize to work on town-specific discussions.

“They said, ‘No way!’” Salmonson said with a laugh. “When they came in the door, they were seven different communities; by the time they’d been through (the training) ... they had become a community.”

Since those leadership meetings, the three larger communities—Sisseton, Britton and Webster, which have a combined population of just over 5,500—became the first Dakota Rising site in South Dakota in 2008, with six area business owners recognized as fellows. The group completed the initial three-year program and did not renew participation due to financial constraints, but is able use the skills learned from the experience for building and supporting entrepreneurs in the Glacial Lakes region.

Another product of Leadership Plenty is the group known as Glacial Lakes Area Development. GLAD,

which was launched in 2007 by a group of Leadership Plenty graduates, focuses on small-business lending, local business, business services training, and economic development within its five communities spanning Marshall County. Scott Amundson, GLAD’s executive director, and its volunteer board of directors has created a local business revolving loan fund of \$1 million and works hand in hand with Grow South Dakota and other regional partners.

“The communities (in Roberts, Day, and Marshall counties) recognize that they’re a region, and they are—to some extent—dependent upon one another,” Salmonson said. **“As a result of learning together ... they came to the realization that they needed each other, and they weren’t in competition with each other. They recognized what’s good for one community benefits the others.”**

Salmonson said the same concept can be replicated in other regional communities, too.

“Anytime people work and learn together, it gives them an extended opportunity to communicate,” she said. “You’ll see them recognize that they are stronger together than they are standing alone.” *



Scott Amundson and Marcia Erickson listen as Linda Salmonson tells a story of regional cooperation.



Yes, there was actual pie. No false advertising here.

Join the conversation! Do you have an example of “possibility thinking” in your community? Share your story at www.pie4.us.

Breathing easy again

Expertise at Sanford Aberdeen helps patients live life to the fullest.



It was during Joey Kusler's annual trip to Las Vegas, N.V., at the end of August when she began to realize something was not right.

"My husband and I would be walking and I would have to sit down constantly," remembers the 77-year-old from Aberdeen. "I was out of breath all the time. It was not a very good experience."

When the Kuslers returned to South Dakota, they made a trip to Sanford Aberdeen and met with Joey's primary care physician who began ordering a stream of tests to get to the bottom of her problems. Quickly it was discovered one of her arteries was extremely blocked and only 20 percent of it was open. She was referred to Sanford interventional cardiologist, Puneet Sharma, MD.

Dr. Sharma proposed a way to relieve her blocked artery by going through Joey's wrist. This type of intervention came with less of a bleeding risk and would allow her to get back to her normal routine fairly quickly.

"Dr. Sharma told me my veins were pretty fragile just due to my age and being a little shorter," remarks Joey. "But he did a wonderful job putting in the stent, and I was so amazed that he could do it all with only a small incision in my wrist."

After only a night in the hospital, Joey was back at home and feeling like her old self again.

"I had noticed that doors were getting harder for me to open and I had just assumed either they were making doors a lot heavier or it was just a

part of getting older," says Joey. "But then after my surgery, I realized it had been my heart. Now I can open doors a lot easier, I have no shortness of breath and I can take big deep breaths without it hitching in my chest. It is a wonderful feeling."

Joey now goes to cardiac rehab right in Aberdeen. The program is there to help patients who have had cardiac procedures regain strength and ease them back into activity and exercise.

"I can go about three times a week," says Joey. "And it's really convenient for me. It has its own special entrance at the hospital. So I go in and walk on the treadmill or do some other light exercise for a bit."

Joey is now feeling so much better than before and she credits all of it

to the team at Sanford Aberdeen.

"Everyone in that place is so nice," says Joey. "I was maybe a little anxious but any question I had, they had an answer. From the doctors to the nurses, they all really pay attention to you, listen to what you have to say and are extremely reassuring. I cannot say enough good things about them."



Puneet Sharma, MD
Interventional Cardiology



FOCUS ON

LEADERSHIP

HOW DO RURAL LEADERS EMERGE? • DECEMBER 10, 2014



On the surface, the leadership situation in many rural communities is easy to describe: From city councils to festival committees to 4-H clubs, there just aren't enough leaders.

But beneath the surface, what's actually happening is not so obvious. Why are these leadership positions not filled? Have we always struggled to have enough leaders in rural places, or has something significant changed?

And once we understand what's actually happening, what can rural communities do to address the challenge?

This is what Prairie Idea Exchange participants explored in December. The ideas they came up with directed most of the stories that follow.

Read on, and see if their answers about "What's happening?" and "What's possible?" in their communities matches what you know about your own community. **We want your voice included in this conversation as well:** Look for the invitation at the end of the articles, or go to www.pie4.us to share your stories and ideas.

We'll reshare your "fruitful" ideas (since we're talking about PIE) in the March/April issue of *Dakotafire*.

The supply-and-demand problem: Fewer people, more positions

by WENDY ROYSTON
additional reporting by KEN SCHMIERER

Want to turn over your position on a board or committee to someone else? Good luck. Finding people willing to serve in leadership positions in the rural Dakotas may be more difficult than it's ever been.

We tend to blame this on a declining population, but there's also another factor at play: At the same time populations are declining, the number of nonprofits is increasing.

At least in part, that's a good thing, according to Ben Winchester, a research fellow at the Extension Center for Community Vitality at the University of Minnesota.

"Social life is actually flourishing in our small communities. People are actually creating nonprofits. ... If our rural communities were truly dying out, we'd probably see a decline in the number of nonprofits across the board, but we don't," Winchester said in a recent webinar on rural leadership demands, citing an increase in nonprofits in rural areas by as much as 15 percent from 2000 through 2010. In the same time-frame, those counties' average populations dipped by an average of 1 percent.

But that's not much comfort to those trying to maintain the leadership of some of those organizations. Over the past few decades, those in civic leadership roles have known that, before they can step down, they must first find someone else to step up.

"Now you need to find two people to replace you, because there are that many more nonprofits," said Winchester.

With change comes opportunity

The population in the Dakotas' most rural counties dropped by nearly 10 percent from 2000 to 2010, but "losing people' does not mean that you're losing everyone," Winchester said. "Most of our rural communities are gaining people aged 30 to 39, but we're losing our kids, and we're losing our seniors."

That means that inside the challenge of declining populations there's also an opportunity—but it will likely require rural communities to make changes.

"The people who are moving to these small towns are creating new nonprofits, because nonprofits reflect the social interest at any given time," he said. "Even in our most rural counties in South Dakota, where you lost 7 to 8 percent of your population, the nonprofits still went up (more than 6 percent)."

Between 2000 and 2010, when the total populations of North and South Dakota grew just 4.7 and 7.9 percent, respectively—but dipped in rural areas—the number of registered nonprofits increased from 5,737 to 6,095 (6 percent) in North Dakota and from 6,078 to 7,095 (16 percent) in South Dakota. Each

nonprofit must have a minimum of a three-member board of directors, according to Internal Revenue Service guidelines, so that means at least 4,125 new leadership positions were created.

The need for governmental representatives, too, is increasing—North Dakota's jumped from 2,395 in 1997 to 2,685 in 2012 (12 percent), while South Dakota's increased from 1,501 in 1997 to 1,983 in 2012 (32 percent).

Those numbers, according to Winchester, account for the obvious city, county and township jurisdictions, as well as the less-obvious water and sewer and soil conservation districts. The numbers do not include committees within those organizations.

"The numbers that I provide are very conservative, but it's a really telling story," he said. "There are a lot of informal groups, too, that are not included in this, so there's a huge asterisk here, but the asterisk isn't that the data is bad—it's even bigger."

According to Winchester's data, in the Dakotas, at least one out of every 22 people—about 4.5 percent of the population—has to not only be involved in some sort of government or nonprofit organization, but has to serve in a leadership role, in order to keep all of the Dakotas' organizations afloat.

But that's for the states as a whole.

In Faulk County (S.D.), one out of every seven people—or 14 percent or three people per city block—has to serve in a leadership role.

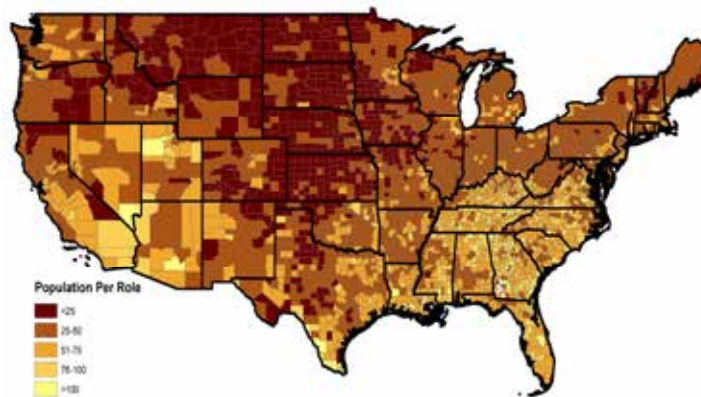
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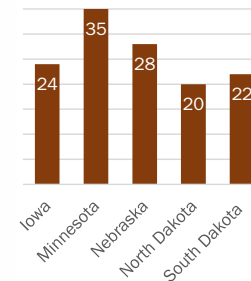
Population per organizational role

Why it's hard to find people to serve, by the numbers

A county's population per leadership role is figured by taking the number of people ages 18 and older in a community and dividing it by the number of positions ("spots") in organizations in the community. **The lower the number, the harder it is to find people to serve.**



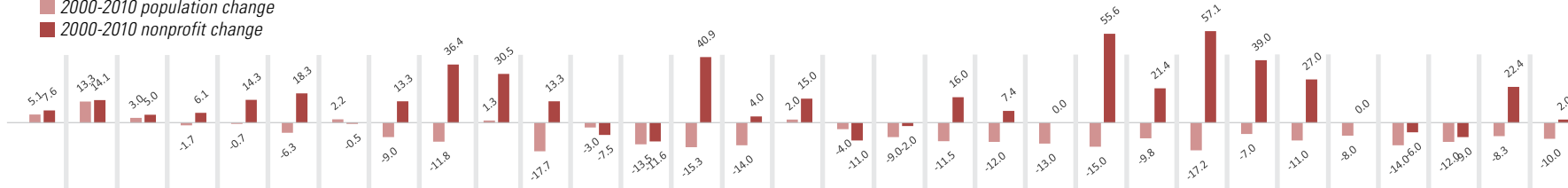
Population per organizational role, statewide



This map suggests that in the Great Plains, plus some rural counties of Western states, as well as parts of Minnesota and Iowa, there is a smaller pool of people to draw from to fill leadership positions in government agencies and nonprofits. It also means there are greater opportunities to serve and lead than in urban areas.

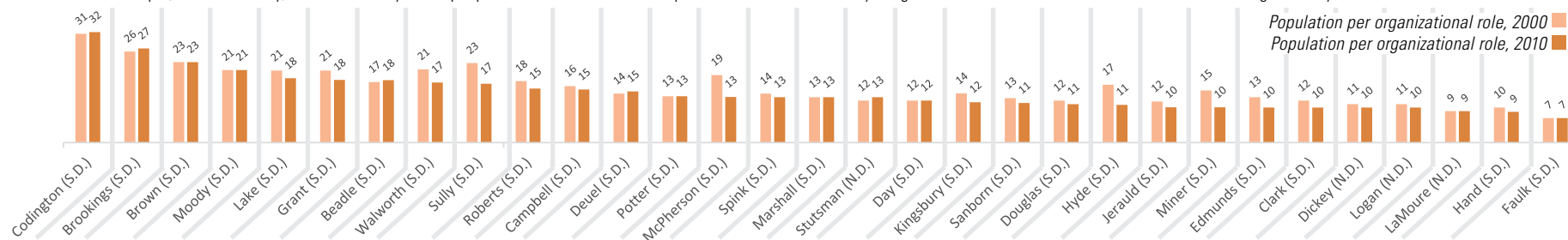
The population in many Dakota counties decreased from 2000 to 2010, but the number of nonprofits did not decrease at the same rate—and in many cases, the number of nonprofits increased.

■ 2000-2010 population change
■ 2000-2010 nonprofit change



The number of people per organizational role increased in Codington, Brookings and Stutsman counties, all of which have a micropolitan community. It held steady or decreased in the others. This ratio means that, for example, in Faulk County, one out of every seven people must serve in a leadership role in order for the county's organizations to function.* All of these numbers are significantly lower than in urban areas.

■ Population per organizational role, 2000
■ Population per organizational role, 2010



*The data is actually even worse than it seems: the numbers include people who are unable to serve due to age or disability.

Graphic by Dakotafire Media (www.dakotafire.net). Data compiled by Ben Winchester, <http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/brain-gain/>.

Sources: Historical number of nonprofits by type: <http://nccsweb.urban.org/tablewiz/bmf.php>; List of Nonprofit Names: <http://nccsweb.urban.org/PubApps/statePicker.php?prog=geoCounties¶m=cq>; Nonprofits by Zip Code: <http://www.melissadata.com/lookups/np.asp>

Continued from page 16

And because that statistic is not adjusted to exclude the youngest and oldest members of a community (those not yet or no longer able to serve), an even higher percentage of “able-bodied” people must volunteer to keep social interests rolling.

Dakotans have always banded together socially

Dakotans have historically been “social beings,” according to Winchester.

“When we first were populating the Great Plains, you had to work together,” he said. “Rugged individualism might get you here, but community kept you here. ... We’ve got this experience of working together, and I think that that—in a lot of ways—is how we’ve been able to weather the storm of the recession so much better.”

According to information gathered by Winchester, communities with higher numbers of nonprofit

Commuting also drives change

Dakotans are driving significantly farther to work than they used to even 12 years ago—and that change affects community involvement at all levels, including leadership positions. If you work in one town, send your kids to school in another, and sleep in yet another, which one do you call “your community”? Where do you get involved? This is one reason place-based organizations are struggling for members and leaders. For much more on how commuting affects community, see the March/April 2014 issue of *Dakotafire*.



Jami Eberle (holding their son, David) and Justin Meidinger of Ellendale, N.D., are active in their community in different ways than older generations may have chosen to be involved. *Photo by Ken Schmierer*

organizations per capita have lower unemployment rates and lost fewer jobs in the most recent recession.

“I think we have been able to survive much better because we have learned how to work together to solve our problems,” said Winchester.

The way people work together and become involved, however, has changed significantly.

“Historically, people would be involved in place-based groups with a wide focus, whereas today people are involved in much more interest-based groups with a narrow focus,” Winchester said.

For example: “Place-based groups,” such as the Gary (S.D.) Area Betterment Committee, focus on activities beneficial to the interests of the community at large, while “interest-based groups,” such as the West Central Minnesota Snowmobilers Association,

focus on a common hobby or belief of the members of the group.

It may be that people struggling to find new recruits to serve in place-based organizations think younger people aren’t getting involved without realizing that many of them are already active—just in different groups.

In Ellendale, N.D., for example, Jami Eberle, 36, and Justin Meidinger, 38, are serving their community in part by supporting the arts opportunities it has to offer. They both serve on the Ellendale Area Arts Council board; Meidinger is also on the OPERA Inc. board, and Eberle is on the Ellendale Tourism board.

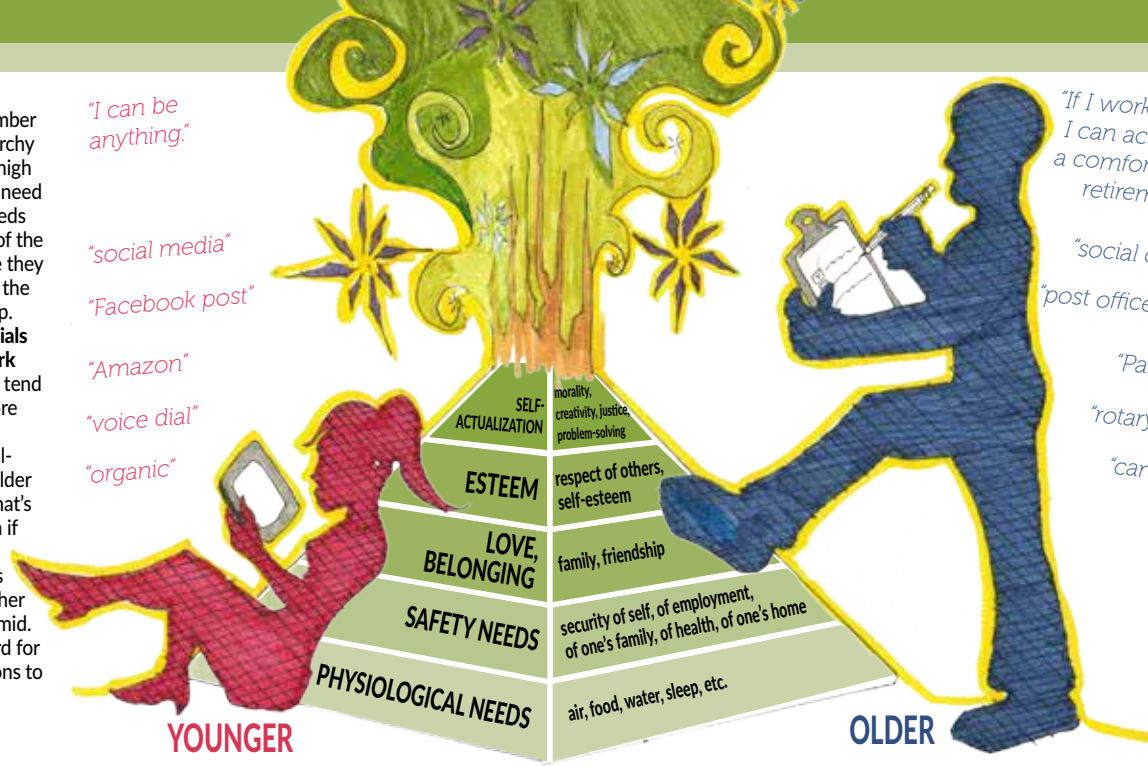
“I want to take part in the cultural outlets that determine what comes to town and bring things to a small community that may not normally come to a small town,” Meidinger said.

Eberle agreed, saying she wants to “expand her horizons and interests right here at home,” adding that she hopes a children’s weekend art program helps cultivate future artists, as well as community leaders.



You may remember Maslow's hierarchy of needs from high school: People need to fulfill the needs at the bottom of the pyramid before they can care about the needs higher up. **Except millennials don't quite work that way:** They tend to be much more focused on the top—self-actualization—than older generations. That's their goal, even if they actually still have needs to address further down the pyramid. This can be hard for older generations to understand.

- "I can be anything."
- "social media"
- "Facebook post"
- "Amazon"
- "voice dial"
- "organic"



- "If I work hard I can achieve a comfortable retirement."
- "social clubs"
- "post office box"
- "Pamida"
- "rotary dial"
- "canning"

YOUNGER LEADERSHIP	OLDER LEADERSHIP
Values social networks	Values hierarchies
Never asks permission	Adheres to policies
Avoids local government	Engages bureaucracy
Works collaboratively	Creates structure
Steps in where needed	Works through positions
Cause-focused	Service organizations
Develops mentoring relationships	Leads by (or learns from) example
Tends to question authority	Tends to respect authority
Emphasizes experiences	Emphasizes end goal
Encourages empowerment, engagement	Delegates tasks
Changes loyalties or locations	Has long-term loyalties
Articulates vision	Task-oriented
Motivated by meaningful work	Motivated by obligation or loyalty

Generations see leadership differently

by JASON UPHOFF & LIZ HANNUM

A transition is happening right now in our workplaces and organizations: As baby boomers reach the traditional retirement age, many positions where they had worked, served and led for years are changing hands.

Not all baby boomers are retiring—many of them are in fact continuing to work past the age of 65—but they are at least considering how they'll hand off their roles to a new generation.

And sometimes, what they see in those coming up

the ranks doesn't match their expectations.

In a 2012 study of millennials—defined broadly as those ages 16 to 34—the Boston Consulting Group found that the older generation quite often views Millennials negatively. The word that came up most often among older survey respondents describing millennials was "lazy," followed by "spoiled," "young," "entitled" and "tech-savvy."

Millennials themselves agreed they that are tech-savvy, but they also called themselves "hip," "cool" and—interestingly—"lazy."

So what does this mean for finding new leaders in the next generation? Are they just not going to work?

A successful transition may depend on understanding the perspective of the other generation.

For example, millennials may call themselves lazy, but that doesn't necessarily mean they don't want to work. They just don't want to work if there's an easier way.

"They put a premium on speed, ease, efficiency, and convenience in all their transactions," according to the BCG report.

Millennials, on the other hand, could perhaps find some understanding in realizing that older generations typically aren't in as much of a hurry; they value other things much more than speed.

The graphic above takes a look at how traditional leadership has worked compared to how young leaders engage in their communities.

Young adults may not know they are needed

by WENDY ROYSTON

The assumption that 20- and 30-somethings are not interested in leadership doesn't hold true for everyone.

"If someone were to say they needed me to step up ... I'd be the first person to say, 'Yes; that's my duty as a young person ... and that's my duty as a member of my community,'" said Heidi Appel, economic manager of the Aberdeen (S.D.) Downtown Association. "At some point, the reins have to be taken over by new people, so I would be more than willing to do so."

But Appel, 35, said she has not been made aware of a need for her leadership skills in her hometown of Redfield. She is, however, very active in the Aberdeen business community, serving on the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce and Aberdeen Development Corp., as well as being involved in the Big Idea Competition, Sertoma Club and Junior Achievement. At least to some degree, Appel said,

officials in Redfield may not have approached her because people in that community may not be aware of the professional abilities she uses in the Hub City, which is roughly 45 miles north of their town, but she and other younger adults would serve in leadership positions if they were aware that they are needed.

Appel thinks her experience could hold true for many other young professionals.

"Young people often aren't tapped by the elders of a community who have held leadership positions, so they are probably just unaware that they are needed, or unaware that the current leadership is ready to check out," she said.

Appel said she realizes she and others could do more to actively pursue leadership positions, but several other obligations vie for their time.

"As a parent of four ... taking a position that meets every week and makes my phone ring off the hook is just daunting," she said. "If the people who are in (leadership) positions right now are comfortable in continuing them or are not interested in

seeking someone to replace them, I am not interested in giving myself additional duties outside of my work and my family."

Those who do step forward to leadership roles without prompting, she said, often are rebelling against the standing leadership.

"They (maybe) have been displeased with what someone in those leadership positions is doing or not doing," she said.

And at times, Appel said, it seems that the older members of a community really do not want the help of the younger generation.

"They're very tied to their roles, so if someone chooses to run against them for city council, they're going to run, too. They want that position, and they will go door to door to keep it," she said.

Appel also noted that the majority of voters in elections tend to be older, and tend to support their peers rather than younger contenders, meaning younger people who do run often lose their races. She speculated that that knowledge may deter other young candidates from running. She said she fears that candidates who run unsuccessfully will lose momentum and the desire for public service.

"I'd like to see communities embrace people who have shown interest in leadership and go door to door with them and get the elders to understand and respect where they're coming from," she said. "If the community could embrace the young person and stand behind them, that would be refreshing."

She suggested potential leaders be invited to participate on a small scale first, to both get a feel for leadership roles and to prove their abilities to the community.

Heidi Appel, second from left, shares an idea while (from left) Lori Finnestad, Liz Hannum and Michelle Maloney listen.



A few extra thoughts on what's happening with rural leadership

"I think leadership is still an exclusive club in small communities. I don't know if it has to do with ... affluence or money. But money brings time, and time gives you the opportunity to volunteer and be a leader. For everyone else it's the daily grind ... If you're 26 and 27 years old with two kids and both are making \$10 an hour, you don't have time, really, to participate and engage and be a leader. ... That's the reality of the situation."
 —Todd Kays

"The fact that a majority of women now are working outside the home changes not just her role, but also her husband's. It's not possible for a woman to be gone from the home 40-plus hours per week, and then come home and be responsible for all of the cooking, cleaning and child rearing on her own, so her husband must chip in with at least some of those tasks to keep the home running. As a result, neither a woman nor her husband has as many hours available to devote to outside-the-home responsibilities, and **they both may find it harder to assume community leadership roles.**" —Wendy Royston

"The local paper is filled with things that happened locally, but a lot of the things that require leadership or the issues you might want to be thinking about or the moves that we might want to do—that's not showing up in the local paper. It's not in the regional paper ... or on the TV news. ... **So there's a lack of knowledge of what the issues might be.**" —Margot Gillette



Todd Kays, lower left, tells a story to Sandi Jaspers (behind Kays), Lori Finnestad and Melissa Waldner.

"As long as each of us continue to talk and act the way we do, the next generation will perpetuate it. **We have to create space for the next generation to think and act in new ways.**" —Jerry Nagel



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New realities may require new ways of doing things

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE and WENDY ROYSTON
 additional reporting by KEN SCHMIERER and BILL KRIKAC, CLARK COUNTY COURIER

If we look at rural leadership challenges as a supply-and-demand problem—the supply of rural leaders is not meeting the demand—then two strategies present themselves: Reduce the demand, or increase the supply.



<p>HOW PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED HISTORICALLY</p>	<p>HOW INVOLVEMENT HAS CHANGED IN RECENT DECADES</p>
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Organizations:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were place-based • were broadly focused (i.e., “community betterment”) • communicated by word-of-mouth • were often based on ag interests, reflecting a community closely tied to agriculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tend to cover a wide geographic area • are narrowly focused, often on self-interest (hobbies or causes) • communicate by technology, including social media • are based on diverse social interests, reflecting a more diverse community |
|--|---|

Green & Haines. 2007. *Asset Building and Community Development*. From a webinar by Ben Winchester, September 2014.

Rethinking what's really needed

Reducing the demand for rural leadership means reducing the number of positions that require rural leaders.

The first reaction to this type of suggestion in rural communities is often negative. It feels like failure, like giving up on something.

But it doesn't need to be seen as failure, suggests Ben Winchester of the University of Minnesota.

“When we think about social organizations, they reflect the social interests of any given time,” Winchester said in a September webinar.

When a community's interests (and values) are no longer in sync with the community's organizations, a change is probably needed somewhere. Consider:

Should an organization be disbanded? If the social interest that led to an organization's founding is no longer relevant to the community, it might be time to disband the group. (One example: In the 1970s, the ladies' auxiliary to the Iowa Pork and Swine Producers was known as the “Porkettes.” By the 1990s, it was probably OK with the community to let that group die.)



Ben Winchester

Should an organization's leadership be downsized? Maybe there's no need for a seven-member board if five or even three could serve the same role. This strategy may be best for organizations that are doing less work than they did before, or that have boards that serve mostly advisory roles. Otherwise, it could end up that the board's work is just divided among fewer people, adding to their stress and putting the organization at risk of burning out its existing leaders.

Should organizations be combined? It's also possible that the defined geography for an organization no longer has an adequate population to support the group, or the defined geography is no longer relevant (people don't see those city limits as the boundary of their community).

“People aren't afraid of traveling,” Winchester said. “‘Place’ has become less relevant, in terms of how people view their ‘community.’ It's much more that ‘communities’ are a region—you live in the middle of everywhere, in a sense.

“(Two groups) may have been on opposite sides of the lake, and been rivals, but today, we find that membership is declining, and maybe ... once they join forces, they might be able to double or triple their membership. There are some really good opportunities there to move that human capital of how to do community-building and how to do fundraising, how to hold events and bring that talent and expertise to some of the groups that need that expertise.”

Greg Furness, a funeral director and co-chair of the Chamber of Commerce in Clark, S.D. (population about 1,100), agreed.

“There comes a time when groups need to consolidate to move forward. There should be some type

of unity or common ground that moves things forward," he said. "There are only so many people to go around in a smaller community. To be efficient and do justice (to the purpose of the organization, people) can only spread themselves so thin."

Going where the energy is

Once a community is open to considering that changing existing structures isn't failure, and can in fact be progress, the next task is figuring out what change is right for the community.

This would be an easier task if everyone in the community agreed on what's best for the community—but they aren't going to, and trying to find universal common ground is usually an unachievable goal, said Joe Bartmann, process host and community coach of Rural Weaver, LLC.

"There's really no such thing as one common vision," Bartmann said. "There are a bunch of visions."

One of the processes that he facilitates in his work with communities is an exercise in which all the people in the room get a chance to share the vision for the community that is important to them. Those ideas are then put up on a wall where people can see them and talk about them.

"This process helps us to see what common ground we do share. It also gives us the opportunity to create space for things that not everyone sees as important," he said. "So instead of trying to wrestle with, 'What do we all agree we need?', we can go where the energy is—what is important to the community are the visions that cause someone to say, 'It's important enough to me that I'll work on it with others.'"

An important part of this process is a change in mindset of the leadership of the community, according to Bartmann: Instead of mandating what they see as best, leaders instead agree to support whatever the community says is important enough to work on.

Once community members have those common visions in mind, they can decide if the current organizations or ways of doing things in the community are the right ones to help them get to where they want to be.

Defining the commitment

Getting people to show up and, perhaps eventually, to serve, "just takes a simple invite to a single event," said Winchester. "It's not an open-ended invitation to something that they're not sure about."

Especially consider whether an official structure is actually needed, Bartmann said. The old model of a committee or board that meets every month doesn't

appeal to many of today's potential leaders.

"You have to give people an 'out' early and often," Bartmann said, so you can tell people, "You don't have to commit to this for five years or a life sentence. This is a three-month thing or a six-month thing." And after that there would be an opportunity to decide if they want to keep working on it or not.

Jeanette Robb-Ruenz, who is the president of OPERA, Inc. and the Ellendale (N.D.) Historical Society and in the past has served on the boards of directors for the Ellendale Area Arts Council and the Whitestone Hill Organization, agreed.

Many people will volunteer for a specific event, she said, but hesitate to attend meetings and take on larger roles. Sometimes they are new to their professions and are cautious of overextending themselves. However, younger adults in the community of just under 1,400 typically are willing to help when asked directly—something Robb-Ruenz says happens more frequently in communities that count their residents by the hundreds rather than the thousands.

.....

Starting to understand how to reduce the demand for rural leaders? Read on for ideas on how to increase the supply.

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Mascot decision empowers young leaders

by JAMIE HORTER

When the Summit and Waubay school districts decided to enter a sports co-op beginning in the fall of 2015, they had many preparations to make. What would the shared school mascot be? What colors should the new sports team have? What would become the school song?

In situations where decisions have long-term effects, it can be easy to appoint a tried-and-true community leader to the task. Summit and Waubay took a different approach: letting the youths decide.

Superintendents and board members of each district stepped back to allow the students from both schools to take ownership of the process.

"What a way to show the youth that they CAN be part of an important decision," said Becky Hubsch, grant writer from the Summit community. She explained the process that enabled youths to move the project forward during the PIE event in December.

Each school's student

council members took charge of the project. They surveyed the student body and greater communities to gain ideas for mascots, colors, and school song. Once all information was gathered, student council members created ballots for the student body to vote.

Through this student-led, democratic process, the schools came up with a recommendation for each school board to approve. The new sports co-op will have the mascot of Mustangs, the colors purple,

silver, and black, and the song "Across the Field."

Current adult leaders enabled youth leaders to emerge by giving project ownership to the students.

The mentorship of adults helped students strengthen their leadership skills for the future. Hubsch noted that one of the skills sharpened was public speaking, as students practiced addressing the school board with updates on the co-op project.

She said that another outcome of youth leadership was bringing the two schools closer together.

"Unity will be important for these students when they participate on the same team next year, so this decision was a great way to kick off that unity," she said.

Leadership transitions often involve risks. However, successful continuations in local leadership depend on the ability of current leaders to encourage and mentor new leaders. Successful transitions involve trust in youths and some guidance to help them succeed in their ideas.

"These students will be able to bring their children back to this community and school and show them 'I helped create this,'" Hubsch said. "What an amazing thing to say, and to leave a footprint in your community."

Or, as will happen in Waubay and Summit, some impressive hoofprints.



The hidden power of giving awards

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE
 reporting by DOUG CARD, BRITTON JOURNAL; ELIZABETH "SAM" GROSZ; and KEN SCHMIERER

Honoring leaders, as many Dakota communities do, seems like a nice thing to do for the recipient. But somewhat surprisingly, giving an award can be just as beneficial to the giver, and to the broader community.

The chemistry of giving

One reason that giving awards benefits both recipient and giver is rooted in human biology.

When people receive awards, they actually have a chemical reaction that makes them feel good, as ethnologist and author Simon Sinek described in a 2013 presentation based on his book *Leaders Eat Last*.

In response to an accomplishment, Sinek says, reward recipients' bodies release dopamine, a hormone that makes them feel happy and satisfied. If that award comes with the applause of people the recipients respect, then they also get a surge of serotonin, another "feel-good" hormone that is released in moments of pride or recognition.

But the interesting thing is that giving an award also raises the serotonin level of the giver, which also makes the giver feel good. And even those who just witness such an interaction can have a hormone reaction that makes them happier, Sinek says.

An act of unity

Scott Meyer, an entrepreneur and blogger from Brookings, S.D., suggests that giving an award can strengthen relationships in a community in a way that makes future action and progress more likely. **"The act of giving recognition empowers the giver and ties the receiver and giver together in their mission,"** Meyer wrote in a recent column. (Read

another column from Meyer on page 28.)

That larger purpose of community unity underlies many awards of recognition, even if the focus is on the person receiving the award.

"The purpose of the Heart of Dakota Awards is to recognize those that are making a difference," according to Doug Card, publisher of the *Britton Journal* and *Langford Bugle*, which sponsor the awards along with the Britton Area Foundation. "The awards not only give deserved attention to those unsung heroes, but build a pride in community as well."

Karen Mikkelson, former Heart of Dakota winner for customer service, agreed that the awards have been good for the community. "I've always said when you live in a community, you don't just live there but become a part of it," she said. "That's very important for a community to survive."

The four-part rationale of the Walk of Fame in Ellendale was to give young people in Ellendale inspiration of what they could accomplish, bring pride to the Ellendale community, develop a spirit of camaraderie in Ellendale, and bring attention to Ellendale, according to Ken Schmierer, one of the founders of the Walk of Fame.

"You may notice that our purpose does not consist of rewarding any individual," Schmierer said. "We feel that these people have received recognition during their lives and do not need additional honors. Our primary purpose is to focus on the community ... paying homage to the process in Ellendale that contributed to help make these and others successful."

The Ellendale community actually decided in 2012 to make that even clearer by honoring "mentors" also—people who played in a role in helping others lead successful lives.

A focus on service

The Delmont Community Club's award recognizes those who have been very active in the community. "Some people you see everywhere," said long-time club president Shirley Weisser. "No matter what is going on, they are out there doing something."

The Heart of Dakota Awards are expressly focused on honoring service to others.

"There are many people in every community that give of their time and talents to make their part of the world a better place," Card said. "Many of those efforts are under the radar."

According to Sinek, that service is the basis of leadership: "Leadership comes at a cost. You don't get to do less work when you get more senior, you have to do more work. And the more work you have to do is put yourself at risk to look after others. That is the anthropological definition of what a leader is," Sinek said. **"Leadership is a choice. It has nothing to do with your position in an organization. If you decide to look after the person to the left of you and the person to the right of you, you have become a leader."**

Recognizing this kind of leadership can serve as inspiration and motivation for others to serve by doing what they can.

"It doesn't have to be a big thing," Mikkelson said. "We always say in church, you don't have to be the preacher or organist. If you make a good batch of cookies—make cookies. Everybody has their talents, and you need the big and the small to make the world go around."

BUILDING LOCAL LEADERSHIP

TEACH NEW SKILLS
New leaders need opportunities to practice skills such as conflict resolution, decision-making, facilitating, running a meeting, listening, visioning, and keeping an open mind.

PROVIDE RESOURCES
When communities have developed a strong network of leaders, the next step is making sure they have the resources necessary to improve the well-being of their communities, so they can accomplish more than they could acting alone.

3. TRAIN

LEAD BY EXAMPLE
Leadership positions provide an opportunity to build trust and mobilize people to make change in their community.

MENTOR NEW OR POTENTIAL LEADERS
Having experienced leaders as mentors is especially important when people are asked to take on new leadership roles.

EXCHANGE LESSONS LEARNED WITH NEXT GENERATION
Both new and experienced leaders will learn from the thoughts and experiences of each other.

PROVIDE COACHING AND EDUCATION
Coaches or workshops require an investment of time and resources, but this education is critical to helping new leaders be successful.

INVOLVE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY IN A VISIONING CONVERSATION
Annual town-hall-style meetings or written surveys can open up healthy conversations and set a path forward for the community.

INCLUDE AND EMPOWER YOUTH

Asking youths to share their opinions and giving them authority to create community projects (while providing resources and guidance along the way) can build amazing leadership skills and community pride.

2. ENGAGE

LISTEN TO THEIR IDEAS
Take time to hear the dreams and visions that others have for the community.

PROVIDE A PATH FROM VOLUNTEERING TO LEADING
With education and an invitation, volunteers can become leaders—which can exponentially increase their positive impact on their communities.

LET ACTION BE DRIVEN BY WHOEVER SHOWS UP
When new voices for change show up at the decision table where existing leaders gather, new ways of caring about the community can result.

CELEBRATE SUCCESS
Create a community culture that celebrates the efforts of local leadership, organizations, businesses, youths and others that develop winning projects.

writing by
PAULA JENSEN
illustration by
JAMIE HORTER

ENCOURAGE & SUPPORT PEOPLE CARE ABOUT
When existing leaders support the passions of others, they empower new leaders.

ACTION FOR WHATEVER ABOUT
change the perspectives of existing leaders, and renew the community's hope for a better future.

COMMUNICATE THE SHARED VISION
Providing quality information that addresses community priorities in a variety of formats—newspaper, fliers, social media and websites—helps make the case for change.

SHARE STORIES FROM CURRENT AND FORMER LEADERS
Learning from the experience and success of others is a great motivator to help others realize their own abilities.

1. INVITE

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME
Start with a small "ask" and save bigger requests for when a stronger relationship has developed.

TELL PEOPLE THEIR SKILLS & TALENT ARE NEEDED
Otherwise, people may assume everything is fine with the status quo.

REQUEST HELP WITH SPECIFIC PROJECTS
People have busy lives. They want to know what's expected and when so they can schedule accordingly.

MAKE INVITATIONS PERSONAL
Face-to-face conversations allow both parties to better understand the invitation and to share your passion about the project.

Six ways to address 'We don't know how'

by PAULA JENSEN

Some of us in rural communities feel as if we are missing the secret ingredient to leadership development: We don't know how to create leaders who are committed long-term. People rise up when there is an immediate need, but then they go away until the next crisis or cause arises.

If there is key ingredient to creating strong community leaders, it's *self-awareness*. Becoming truly self-aware means that people understand their own strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, attitudes, opinions and motivation. Our communities can support that path to self-awareness and leadership development by creating a local culture that is open to change, reflective of where we came from, considerate of tradition, and eager to engage all residents

from young to old so they can flourish as leaders in the many areas of community life.

The following six strategies can help begin the process of improving self-awareness and creating the communities we want to live in.

1 CREATE READINESS – A community's level of readiness to produce new leaders in the community is highly dependent on a variety of socioeconomic circumstances that must be considered. For example:

- Potential new leaders may be facing financial barriers or other challenges that prevent them from volunteering in a leadership role.
- Established leaders are sometimes uncomfortable sharing power, accepting change, or valuing diverse perspectives.

Before a community can develop leaders, established community organizations must recognize these circumstances and work to provide accommodations that will create readiness.

2 CREATE LEARNING EXPERIENCES – New leaders of any age, when given responsibility and opportunities to lead, develop self-awareness and create their leadership capacity simultaneously. Experiential learning happens when we give people leadership roles, engage them in community projects, and provide opportunities to implement their own ideas.

3 CREATE MENTORS – Mentoring requires an investment of time and resources, but this one-on-one support strategy is critical for new leadership to be successful. Mentoring is especially needed when people are asked to take on leadership roles and operate in an environment that may be unfamiliar to them.

4 CREATE SKILLS – Communities can host trainings that assist in developing needed leadership skills such as conflict resolution, decision-making, fundraising, grant writing, facilitating, creating an agenda, leading a meeting, listening, mediating, keeping an open mind, goal setting, partnership development, public speaking, and visioning.

5 CREATE TRUST – Communities with strong relationships built on trust and an established network of partners, resource providers, leaders, and local citizens are more capable of working together to improve the overall socioeconomic well-being of their community and to accomplish more than they ever could have imagined acting alone.

6 CREATE KNOWLEDGE – Communities must create quality information strategies that address community priorities. This network of knowledge is a powerful tool for making the case for change in your community and provides an invitation for new leadership to rise. Sharing knowledge and information to the general community and other organizations in a useful format such as websites, newspapers, social media, and person-to-person is highly effective in rural communities.

Creating new leadership is possible, and it's worth the effort. Some impacts of new leaders are quantifiable, such as new policies, new programs established, and projects completed. Other impacts will be more difficult to measure, but are just as important: self-awareness, personal empowerment, changes in attitudes and perspectives of existing leaders, and a renewed commitment and hope in the community for creating a better future. *

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Will you be mayor in five years?

MAYOR <<YOUR NAME HERE>>

by SCOTT MEYER

If someone can move to your community and within five years realistically run for mayor, your community is open to newcomers—open to them not just moving there but also contributing to the community.

This openness is the No. 1 reason people move to a city and is identified as decisive in determining a resident's attachment to the community. Research continues to find tolerance and openness as the key ingredient for a vibrant community, but what do we do to foster this trait?

Open power structures

Too often our local political systems and power structures are closed to outsiders. Someone needs the correct last name to lead (often in small towns) or tremendous wealth and connections to represent (often in large cities).

This is my biggest fear for my hometown. While there is growing diversity in every way (ethnicity, education, occupations, sexual orientation,

Scott Meyer is the bro-founder and chief outreach officer for 9 Clouds, a digital marketing services provider and educator, and Lemonly, a company that specializes in



creating infographics. Meyer lives in Brookings, S.D.

language), this diversity is not adequately nurtured.

Put simply: Where do people go when they move to town to find people they want to connect with?

Locally, we're trying three things:

1. **We've started hosting 1 Million Cups as a weekly gathering to share diverse ideas and create a regular event with an open-door policy.** Anyone can come, and it's the same time and place every week. We've found this consistency and ability to quietly sneak in and join important for attracting newcomers.
2. **We are putting together civic headhunters who are identifying people we need to keep in our community and making sure they know they are valued.** We give these people the stage at events like TEDxBrookings so they feel appreciated and can share their insights.
3. **We are discussing international welcome teams.** This would be a small number of people with key skills to attract new residents from around the globe. As an example, local manufacturer Twin City Fan can't find enough people to work in its factory and is planning on expanding elsewhere. By putting together a lawyer, a translator and

key contacts, we can attract workers from abroad to move to our community. It's not just the job they need, but also help getting permits, finding housing in the community and most importantly, feeling welcomed. Who knows, in five years they might be mayor.

Despite the efforts of government or organizations, the task of making a community feel open to newcomers is everyone's responsibility. A single person or encounter can make a newcomer feel unwelcome, so it is essential to build openness into every event and aspect of community life.

Ferguson and lack of representation

When a system does not represent newcomers, they have the choice to get involved (by voting or running for election) or leaving the community altogether. When a system is not open to change, most people will put their hands up and say, "Forget it. I'm out."

More dangerously, when a system doesn't represent its residents and the residents don't have the ability or desire to leave, protest is the only option left to spark change.

In November, violence erupted in Ferguson, Mo., and communities

around the United States in solidarity with Ferguson. In a community that is 67 percent black, the police force is 94 percent white. The anger in Ferguson and around the country is not based on this single incident, but a history of underrepresentation, discrimination and violence. For many, the shooting of Michael Brown showed there was no hope for change without protest.

Our communities may not perfectly represent the residents (yet). Our communities must, however, provide the possibility of change. Without openness to the voices of all residents, new and old, our communities will alienate and anger those who are not heard.

It is easy to create tax incentives, recruit businesses or build facilities in a community. It is much harder to change a culture. Changing a culture to be more open to newcomers is the most important step to make a community more vibrant.

Before we worry about programs or plans, we need to ask if we are open to people different from ourselves in our town. We have to ask newcomers if they feel welcome.

Most importantly, we need to honestly ask ourselves: Could I be mayor in five years? *

If you've ever said, "Well, nobody asked" ...

This is your official invitation.



What's next with the Prairie Idea Exchange?

Here are the topics that Dakotafire and PIE will tackle over the next year:

March/April:
Wealth

May/June:
Main Street

July/August:
Soil/Agriculture/
Food

September/October:
Energy

November/December:
Building Community/
Youth Involvement

January/February 2016:
Building the Region

The issues in purple boxes are PIE issues: They will be preceded by a Prairie Idea Exchange gathering, and the content in the magazine will reflect what we learn at that event. All of the issues will be followed by a Dakotafire Café event in a community in the eastern Dakotas. Watch later issues for a schedule of the public events.

Have something to say about rural leadership?

You are invited to add your voice to the conversation! There are three ways to do so:

- 1** Send in the postcard included here. Add your two cents (and a stamp)!
- 2** Go online at www.pie4.us and click on "Leadership" to join in a regionwide discussion!
- 3** Join us at a Dakotafire Café—Special PIE Edition event: in Sisseton in February. Details TBA. Watch dakotafirecafe.com for details.

We'll revisit the topic of leadership in the March/April issue. Give us your input by Monday, Jan. 26, for your input to be considered for publication.



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Digging deep in **DOLAN**

A small town is working on big things through the generosity of its residents

by WENDY ROYSTON
photos by HEIDI MARTILA-LOSURE



The school recognized the community's gifts with a display made of floorboards on the wall.

In Doland, S.D., help is just around the corner.

"People like to help people here," said Bonnie Wagner, a Doland High School graduate who now runs an insurance business in town, as she reminisced about a recent "harvest bee" in which local farmers helped one of their own, who had been stricken ill. "If somebody needs help ... we are gung-ho. It's crazy how much is raised in one night at a benefit."

Margot Gillette, who was born and raised in nearby Redfield, S.D., but now works at the Beadle-Spink Enterprise Community (BASEC) office in Doland, agreed.

"It's really, really nice to watch when they all come together for whatever project is going on," she said.

Recently the community of just over 200 raised more than \$65,000 in a matter of a few days to refurbish the gym floor when residents heard they might lose home games otherwise.

"There are a tremendous amount of people who live in this area who are committed to this community, and there are a lot of people who are from here, but no longer live here who are committed to this community, and it's really nice to see them to come together for

whatever project is going on," Gillette said.

Whether it's in reaction to an illness or tragedy, or proactive support of school or city projects, people in Doland put their money where their mouths are.

"You see it over and over and over again," said Gillette. **"It's been a great five years in the ag economy, but even when belts are tight, when there's a need, people will step up."** ... If you have more, you can give more, but that's not the point. ... Everybody has something to give."

That spirit of giving is not surprising in a community where friends and neighbors and business associates and—yes, even family—are the same people.

"The farmers and homeowners are wonderful people," said Wagner. "I don't call them my customers. I call them my friends, because they are."

Like many towns in northeastern South Dakota, "small" has been a way of life for generations.

"Doland has never had more than 500 people in it," Gillette said. "It's not like it started out as a town of 5,000 and it is now 200. ... It never was that much bigger than around that 500 mark."

The community has proved repeatedly that it is small but mighty, according to residents there. At a recent spaghetti feed, more than \$20,000 was raised in just three hours to support a new, municipally-owned day care facility.

"My original thought was to make enough money on the fundraiser to build a basement," Doland Mayor Craig Schroeder said. "And we did."

Becoming more than a bedroom community

"We want young people to live here. You're not going to get young people to live here if you don't have a day care, because people work, and they need to have a place to take their kids for day care," said Schroeder.

In order to be eligible for the Governor's Daycare Program, the facility had to be city-owned, so



Doland school board members Dwight Lyren and Julie Schneider stand on the new gymnasium floor that was replaced with money raised in just a few days when the community was made aware of the need.



Bonnie Wagner enjoys living and working in the town where she grew up.

Schroeder presented the idea to the council, which approved it before the full grant was secured for the roughly \$90,000 project.

“Initially, I thought, ‘If we could get donations for the basement, (the city) would swing the rest,’” Schroeder said.

“The goal was to either eliminate or cause the ... building of the facility to cost nothing,” Gillette said. “From what we can tell from other small town day cares, what puts them under is having to pay back that facility loan. ... With the ups and downs of a day care ... that has a significant impact, so if we could create a scenario where the facilities costs were eliminated... we didn’t have to worry about that, we got a good chunk of that taken care of with \$20,000 in donations.”

Many of the day care’s needs—appliances, toys, furniture—were donated, and fundraising

continues for the building.

The facility, which is slated to open in early 2015 is conveniently located across from the school.

“We really wanted it across from the school, so you could ... pull up and pick everybody up,” Schroeder said.

Gillette pointed out that the day care-school relationship in Doland has a lot more significance than a common street, too.

Program expansion for growing school

Unlike most schools in the state, the Doland School District has actually grown over the past decade, from 163 students in K-12 in 2004 to 179 in

Continued on page 34



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The Doland School District invested in new housing for its superintendent this year.

this fall—nearly a 10 percent increase—and community leaders are hopeful that a need for more day care staff than originally anticipated will mean the school will grow, too.

“You can’t send your kid to preschool in town if you don’t have day care and you work somewhere else,” she said, pointing out that the nearest communities with preschools are 30 miles away, making it impossible for parents to transport their children to and fro in the middle of the workday.

It wasn’t until last school year that the school offered preschool, either.

“Kids are getting pushed a lot faster,” school board member Julie Schneider said. “We were afraid our kids might get behind.”

Plus, the board was concerned that kids who attended preschool might open-enroll permanently in those other districts.

“We were afraid of losing those kids,” Schneider said.

Dakota communities are well aware of the implications of declining enrollment, and know that every child enrolled is one more opportunity to keep the local school open. Twenty miles from Doland, the Conde school, which once co-oped with Doland for

athletics, is an example of what can happen when a school’s enrollment falls too far. The school had attempted to run self-funded after the Legislature decided it would close schools with enrollments of under 100 or less in the late 2000s. Conde School was among those that closed.

“You always worry—if the school closes, what will happen” to local businesses and residents, said Wagner, remembering a not-too-distant time when closure of the Doland school was discussed. Shortly thereafter, enrollment increased as young men returned home to help with their fathers’ family farms. “I don’t think anybody even talks about that anymore, because the numbers are growing, and the funding seems to be going better, but that would be a challenge for a lot of us.”

Providing basic necessities for employees

In order for the school itself to function properly, it needs good leadership on the inside. And, in order to keep good help, the school needs good, affordable housing available to its staff. The Doland school system had previously purchased a home to be used by

its acting superintendent. But recently, that home was showing its age.

"The house was in need of some repair, and it was (a question of whether we) stick money into an old house, or do we look at something that's a lot more attractive and feasible," said Schneider.

So the old house was sold to Doland Housing and Development, which rents the property out currently.

"It's a nice house in comparison to a lot of the others in town," said Gillette, "because it's been lived in."

With nothing in town available for sale that was as nice as the school wanted for its top employee, the school board took advantage of a governor's house grant.

"It's hard to get a good superintendent to move to a small, rural town, but we can use this as a benefit," school board member Dwight Lyren said.

A lack of suitable housing in Doland has been a deal-breaker for others looking to move to town, too.

Housing crunch hinders growth

Last summer, a Doland High School graduate was looking to move his family back to town, but had to change plans after reviewing the local housing market.

"He already had a job here. ... When he got here, he found out the house he was going to rent was undesirable, because it had mold in the basement," according to local business owner and farmer LeAnne Bawek. "He could not find anything to live in. ... He ended up going to Redfield and getting another job and taking his kids and taking his employment. Gone."

A similar situation arose when the school attempted to hire a new janitor. This kind of thing is a wakeup call, she said.

"We've seen small towns lose their schools. It's the biggest employer. ... That's the biggest things that scares us," Bawek said. "If we lose that school, how long before your town just slowly deteriorates?"



Beadle and Spink Enterprise Community has its office in Doland. From left is board president Craig Schroeder (also Doland's mayor); Margot Gillette, executive director; and Amy Hofer, public relations and finance manager.

Bawek and a friend, Glenda McNutt, were working at a community blood drive in February 2014, when they began discussing the recent retirements of three Doland teachers, who were not looking to move out of town, and so no housing would become available for the teachers who would replace them. McNutt and Bawek perceived a major housing crisis in the community.

"Our housing stock is 100 years old," said Bawek. "If it's vacant, it's not necessarily livable, or it's a 'hunter house.' ... The last house built was built in 1990," and virtually no one is moving out of their homes.

In response to the impending need for teachers

who likely could not find a place to live in Doland, McNutt and Bawek agreed "someone should do something" about the community's housing crisis. They quickly realized that "someone" was them.

"When you decide that you're going to take on a project here, you might as well figure you're going to do it, because it's not like somebody is going to jump up and (do it)," said Bawek. "Lack of people equals lack of time, and most people are focused on their families and businesses. ... They don't have the time to deal (with outside responsibilities)."

Continued on page 36



LeAnne Bawek stands in front of Doland's triplex. The building project started when she and her friend, Glenda McNutt (top right, working hard on insulation installation day) had a conversation about the town's housing challenges. At right, McNutt and Bawek visit with Mayor Craig Schroeder inside the triplex-in-progress.



Continued from page 35

So, with the help of BASEC, the newly formed Local Opportunity Company started the process of applying for a grant to build a new, \$400,000 triplex as the northeast "cornerstone" of Doland.

"It was kind of a Hail Mary type of thing, because who was going to give two gals in Doland, S.D., \$100,000 to build a house?" Bawek said.

She completed her own housing study for the

community, and highlighted Doland's growing school and business community, as well as its up-and-coming day care, in the application.

"It's all connected, and you need multiple parts of it to make it work. It wouldn't work if we built the house and there wasn't a day care and there weren't jobs," she said.

The hard work paid off, and the Local Opportunity Company received a \$140,000 grant in May. Another \$140,000 has been provided for the project through five private investors, and BASEC is supporting a more than \$100,000 loan.

And it's been full speed ahead ever since. McNutt

and her husband have been hired by the Local Opportunity Company as the contractor for the project. The first unit is slated to open in January, and the other two should follow in February and March, according to Bawek. So far, none of the units is rented, although several members of the community have inquired about doing so.

Doland Housing and Development also has been working in recent years to clean up dilapidated houses, and is in the process of exploring the potential of "rehabbing" a run-down house in town, to get it back on the market.

Local leaders make Doland a poster town

So, what makes Doland tick? According to Gillette, it's the people.

"The leadership in Doland is remarkable. You're seeing it on the City Council and the school board and the citizens here," said Gillette, adding that the community of Doland is a role model to other small towns across the Dakotas. "We work in seven communities, and it's very important to BASEC that our other communities hear Doland's success (because) we're here to help them, too."

And the community is working hard to ensure it will have another generation of leaders. Once each year, the adults and youths join forces to tackle a major community service project. The three adults and 10 youths on the board of the Doland Pride work together to plan each year's project. Then, for one day, all students in seventh through 12th grades work together

to accomplish that year's project. Past projects have included painting all of Main Street's buildings and cleaning up nuisance properties. That's a lot of community service for roughly 64 students to tackle, but leaders in Doland say the benefits of working hard on the project are bigger than most for-pay jobs.

"It's a good marketing tool to get them to aspire for the scholarships," said Wagner. "It's community work; it's not 4-H, and it's not sports or arts. A lot of us in the community look at ... (their) attitude during Doland Pride" in determining the recipients of scholarships.

Identifying a need to move forward

But community progress wasn't always the name of the game in Doland.

Schroeder became mayor about the time the bank that now houses BASEC closed, and the last new home built or brought into town was in the 1990s.

"I thought we needed to do things that (made)

the city ... a little more progressive and get things going," he said. "Things were backing up really fast, and it scared me a little bit, so I thought we needed to get some things done."

Gillette said that the biggest factor in Doland's successes since Schroeder became mayor five years ago, has been an ongoing transition of leadership.

"Doland has always had strong leaders in the development movement, but **what we're seeing in Doland now is a stepping up of younger people in the development movement,**" she said. "That's really an important element—that the baton of leadership and development be continued by the people who are carrying it now, and that we bring in new people in with new energy and new ideas. That's what we're seeing in Doland, and that's why so many things are happening." *



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Discussion connects health care and community

by WENDY ROYSTON

Two things that are highly valued in Wessington Springs are its local health care systems and community camaraderie. And those two things go hand in hand, according to discussion at the Nov. 18 Dakotafire Cafe held there.

“Right now, in this community, our biggest shortage is not physicians. ... Our biggest shortage is nursing,” said Dr. Tom Dean, a Wessington Springs physician who spoke to a crowd of roughly 35 of his friends and neighbors Nov. 18 during a Dakotafire Cafe. “We’ve had to utilize out-of-community services to bring in nurses to serve both the nursing home and the hospital, and that is very expensive, and it also interferes with continuity.”

Dean has worked with Horizon Healthcare and provided service through Avera Weskota Memorial Hospital since it opened in 1978. He was interviewed for two health care articles for the November/December edition of *Dakotafire*, which focused on rural health care.

Dean highlighted two other topics during his 10-minute presentation: technology and efficiency.

“(Recent technological advancements have) been mostly positive. The biggest part of technology has been the communication technology that allows us to link up with the bigger facilities,” said Dean, referencing the Avera network’s eEmergency system. “That’s probably the most important technological advancement that I’ve seen in the 35 years that I’ve been here.”

But other advancements are not all good.

“Electronic records do demand a lot of attention,” Dean said. “They help us do things more efficiently and remind us of things that sometimes get left out, but on the other hand, they clearly are still a little bit awkward, and we have a ways to go.”

Another aspect of health care that Dean said should be improved is its efficiency.

“Health care costs too much,” he said. “Whether you look at it in comparison to other countries that have better outcomes than we do; or whether you look at it in proportion to the overall economy, compared to other developed countries; or whether you look at the portion that it takes out of individual families’ budgets—(by) any of those tests, it costs too much.”

Why are the costs too high? Dean says the answer is complicated.

“There’s no one, single answer, but so much of it has to do with how we pay for care, and our current



payment structures really make no distinction between high-value care and care that has lesser value.”

Dean said a system needs to be developed that rewards systems that actually provide good care in preventing and curing disease, rather than promoting a system in which some facilities perform tests and procedures mostly for the purpose of reimbursement.

Another of Dean’s concerns for the future of health care also stems from health care that sometimes is delivered unnecessarily.

“Fragmentation of care ... (also known as ‘patient choice’) is a real conundrum,” Dean said. “On one hand, I think all of us believe that people should have at least some control over who they see and what care they get. On the other hand, if they bounce back and forth between one provider and another, things get missed, things get duplicated, things get lost, inappropriate things get done. The quality of care decreases, and the cost of care goes way up.”

He said the solution lies somewhere between “coordinated care” and freedom of choice.

“That is a challenge, but I think that we are making progress,” Dean said, adding that the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) is moving health care mostly in the right direction, despite its political complications.

“These are complex issues on their own, and then when you throw in politics, they end up almost impossibly complicated,” he said. “Somehow, it would be nice—although I realize I am probably dreaming—if we could focus on just improving the care that people get, and put the politics aside. That simply isn’t reality.”



Dr. Tom Dean shares his perspective on trends in health care at the Dakotafire Café. Photo by Wendy Royston

Dakotafire Café conversation

Following Dean's presentation, members of the Wessington Springs community spent about an hour addressing the shortage of health care professionals in the rural Dakotas and how to overcome that challenge using a fast-paced roundtable discussion model. The discussions centered on the factors causing the shortages, what would be possible if quality help was plentiful, and what the community can do to make health care workers feel more welcome and appreciated. Ideas from those conversations can be viewed in the photos on this page.

Following the event, the Rev. Sara Olson Dean, pastor of United Church of Christ, said the experience was beneficial to her community.

"The Dakotafire Café helped the participants to realize just how many connections there are between health care and everything else in the community," she said. "Housing, education, amenities—these all impact our ability to attract health care providers. But it's also true that having a strong cadre of health-care workers can be a force for improvements in all of these areas. It is good for us to engage with our neighbors—both by listening and by speaking our own minds—and the format of the Dakotafire Café encouraged us to do just that."

Brenda Deine, who retired after working in the education system for nearly three decades, said the format of the event is appealing to members of today's fast-paced society.

"(They) kept the ball rolling, and got us through it," she said. "It's a place for everyone to get together and have a discussion and ... get to know each other." *



Participants went through three rounds of discussions. The top ideas harvested from this conversations are depicted below. Photos by Wendy Royston

What might be influencing healthcare workers' decisions about choosing to work in small rural communities (not including salary and benefits)?

- Wellbeing of current workforce improved
- Expand ELDER CARE
- Main Street + School would thrive
- Good ripple effect on town economy (housing, retail, education, etc)
- MORE BUSINESSES Bigger School
- Increased and improved health services
- Contrawity Of Care + Better care
- Financial Better feely
- Relationship for town (community + local call workers)
- Increased housing - education - infrastructure - school
- PEOPLE ARENT AWARE OF THE GOOD SIDE OF RURAL LIFE
- Increased communication
- Recognize employees
- for aides higher salary
- RURAL LIFE FOSTERS GOOD DOCTOR/PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS
- getting more feedback from younger/newer folks
- Recognize employees
- for aides higher salary
- Expand opportunities 4 Women
- Look of jobs to spouse or partner
- Job for Spouse
- PROMOTE WS AMENITIES
- Outsiders + feel so welcome
- Small/Cultural Activities
- Welcoming?
- High School - CNA
- People, community within health care staff on healthcare topics
- More approach + include in social interactions
- get current jobs to the spouse
- Include them in your Families
- Likeable, heads first - community
- WELCOME those with connections to local businesses

What could our community be doing to make healthcare workers feel more welcome and appreciated here?

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SEEDS of WISDOM

FARMERS AND RANCHERS ON FARMING AND RANCHING

by PETER CARRELS

Below are scenes from the Mortenson Ranch in Stanley County, S.D. In the center, Todd Mortenson rides with his sons, Quinn and Jack. *Photos by Colette Kessler, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Dakota*

Watch the winds wiggle and bend grasses on an open plain. It's a rhythmic response on the ground to moving air. This movement, this dance, has been stilled on more than 235,000 square miles of North America. Grasslands have been steadily destroyed during the past century and a half, and that destruction accelerated in recent years as industrial corn and soybean farming spread across the land.

The immediate financial allure of rapidly rising commodity prices, and the ready availability of price supports and yield insurance for grain growers steered many to the process of establishing more and more cultivated fields.

Not Todd Mortenson, however. A prodigious mantle of healthy grasses still

swirls with the wind on the Mortenson ranch. And it's a big place, more than 16,000 acres, much of it ranging along the Cheyenne River in west central South Dakota, and hosting a herd of cattle that exceeds 1,000 head. Mortenson resists the temptation to grow grains, even though most of the land in his area has

been recently planted to corn, soybeans or wheat. His place has become a showcase of conservative conservation, an island of grassy prairie increasingly surrounded by grain fields at this very rural and remote western edge of the steadily expanding corn belt.

Todd is the third generation of Mortensons to caretake this place. His grandfather began to piece the ranch together during the financial depression that followed World War I, when short-sighted land management practices created conditions that caused the Dust Bowl. The ground was in bad shape, and his grandpa was intent on bringing back its health and productivity. That mission captivated Mortenson's father, too.

"My dad spent his entire life working to repair this land," Mortenson

Continued on page 42



said, adding that it's become a family tradition. "I enjoy helping the land to heal, and maintaining and improving the health of the land."

Only 200 acres of nongrassy cropland remain on the entire operation. The rest of the ranch is grass, pasture, and streamside-riverside areas that include native grass species favored by grazing animals, including cattle. The family is aiming for a grassland-only goal, and "we're almost there," Mortenson said.

He noted that soils continually subjected to intensive row-cropping practices require many years of attentive rehabilitation in order to restore soil health. The remaining cropland is currently planted to a special, fine-stemmed grass, and Mortenson views that plant as a steppingstone plant during the transition to the native grasses and forbs that will soon dominate all the ranch.

During his run as manager of the place, Mortenson has boosted biological diversity by returning more native plants, creating more wildlife habitat, and increasing wildlife numbers. He also introduced holistic grazing practices to cattle management. Together, the strategies have created better grass, improved riparian areas, and kept cleaner water in rivers and streams.

"We're growing plants that are native to the area," he said, "and we're basing our grazing practices on seasonal patterns that would have been followed by bison. We're trying to mimic what naturally works best here."

Mortenson watches wildlife diversity to help him understand and gauge the successes of his land management practices. He pays special attention to bees and birds, counting curlews, godwits and grasshopper sparrows as essential residents of the land.

"You've got to have a diverse landscape to provide

diverse habitat," he said.

He knows, for example, that long-billed curlews—a larger bird that nests on western prairie—need flat, open ground to guard their nests and young against predators.

"If the flat ground is plowed and planted to row crops," he said, "you lose curlew habitat, and that means you lose the curlew."

You hear it in Mortenson's voice as he describes his ranch, the land, and the responsibility that accompanies owning a large expanse of earth. You hear it in his words and in his expression of purpose. He is humbled and grateful to be a steward of the earth.

Mortenson walks his land or sees it up close from the back of a horse. There's no noise or mechanical interference as he observes and studies.

"I have a good vantage," he noted. "If you're up high and shielded from the elements in a tractor, you can't notice the details and appreciate the characteristics of the land and wildlife."

The summer of 2014 was a good one for grasslands on the Mortenson ranch.

"Our place is on the western edge of the mixed grass prairie region," he said. "But last summer the place looked like it was covered by tallgrass prairie. This was one of the best years I've seen. Moisture was ample and timely, and temperatures never got too high. And it was oddly humid much of the summer."

Just as prairie grasses grew high and thick, so too did local corn yields boom. But corn prices fell dramatically at the same time as field production soared.

"Not only does the farm bill protect grain farmers from failing, and going broke, it allows them to take risks," Mortenson said. "The farm bill creates an unfair playing field in agriculture, and it can also encourage a glut of grain, forcing taxpayers to help subsidize overproduction

and grain storage."

Those risks, he makes clear, are not just financial. "Consider the unsustainable practices some cropping practices inflict on the land," he said. "Those are real risks posed to soils and resources."

As grain prices cycle downward, Mortenson predicts more land in his area will be planted back to grass. It's a tendency dictated less by stewardship than economics, and that's an emphasis he would change.

"If land is replanted back to grass, it should not be allowed to be broken again. Some of the land in my neighborhood has been broken three times in the past four decades. This back and forth between grass and grain is hard on the land. Plus, how many times should the taxpayer pay for land to be planted back to grass?"

In 2011, the impressive stewardship practices followed on the Mortenson ranch were recognized by the Sand County Foundation when the Mortenson family accepted the prestigious Leopold Conservation Award for South Dakota. More than 1,700 ranches and farms were eligible for the award, making the recipient all the more noteworthy.

The Mortensons have steadfastly adhered to a grassland-ranchland philosophy through decades of economic and agricultural turbulence in the world around them. They have relied on land stewardship, biodiversity and hands-on hard work to make their operation profitable. Those sound like new-fangled values in this era of GMOs, big iron, neo-nic seeds, monoculture specialization, and mechanized synthetic fertilizer applications. But the landscape that supports the Mortenson ranch is a remnant landscape, an old-fashioned perennial prairie. It needn't be replanted each year. Chemical use is minimal. Some of the prairie is restored, and some of it is truly native. But all of it is beloved by its owners. And that's the depth, scale and scope of a land management and agricultural philosophy we need more of. That's the type of farming-ranching practice that's not trendy, nor should it ever be out of fashion. *

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'Two and Two Make Four': the Schense quads

by EMILY JESSUP GUHIN

When the Fischer Quints of Aberdeen turned 50 in September 2013, the event triggered memories of another multiple birth in Brown County that occurred three decades earlier. The Schense quadruplets were born on Jan. 13, 1931, at St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen.

The parents, Fred and Minnie Schense, lived on a farm six miles south of Aberdeen and already had three children: Virgil (14) Arlene (6) and Fred Jr. (4).

Before their births, Minnie had been confined to the hospital for some weeks. Having no mother at home added to the problems of the family that was described in the newspaper as "hard put to make ends meet and keep the wolf from the door."

After learning of the birth of Jean Marie, Joan Belle, James Farrell and Jay Eugene, the people of Brown County rallied to help. The *Aberdeen Evening News* announced that a group of businesses and individuals had contributed funds to this hardworking, but poor family. The donor list included amounts from \$10 down to 50 cents.

Dr. W.D. Farrell, who delivered the four babies, and St. Luke's Hospital donated all the care for the mother and babies for the months they remained in the hospital. Others contributed blankets, clothing, coal and groceries. Dakota Sash and Door constructed a four-compartment crib. Gifts included a gallon of honey and a new dress for the mother. Fan

mail was received from across the nation. By the beginning of February, \$607 had been collected.

When her babies were only 2 years old, Minnie died of a heart attack. Ella Nelson had been hired as a household helper during Minnie's illness. After Minnie's death, Ella continued her care of the family, eventually marrying Fred. The family then moved to a farm 8 miles south of Hecla. Fred and Ella's family grew when Janet, William, Edward and Roger were born. The 11 children grew up on the farm and attended a one-room school near their home.

By 1939, due to some publicity about quadruplet sets around the U.S., new attention was focused on the children. A committee by M.M. Guhin, a Northern State University professor, was formed for another fundraising drive with a goal to finance a trip to Galveston, Texas, for a national convention of quadruplets. (There were five other sets known at that time.) About \$240 was raised, but the trip was canceled and the money was banked. The committee felt its job wasn't complete and it wanted to form a statewide educational foundation for the quads. They organized a "tag day" around South Dakota, which brought in \$1,383. The group also worked toward sponsoring the education of the quads in Aberdeen, where they could receive training in music, dance and other skills. So in January 1940, 9-year-old Joan, Jean, James and Jay moved to Aberdeen where they attended third grade at Monroe School and lived with Mamie Kirley, the sister of M.M. Guhin.

During the spring, seven Aberdeen first-grade teachers under the direction of Edna Durland assembled a reading primer entitled *Two and Two Make Four*, featuring the quads. The 34-page book contained stories and photographs of the children in school, on a farm, at the circus and in an airplane. This publication was reported in *Newsweek* magazine's Aug. 19, 1940 issue. Copies were used in the Aberdeen schools and ordered for virtually every rural school in the

state. The book can be viewed in historical collections of South Dakota.

After about seven months in Aberdeen, the quads were homesick, and Fred was unhappy with the arrangements that had been made for them. So the children returned to the farm. The remaining money was put into a trust for them.

The quads led typical lives of a farm family, doing the work needed to grow crops and livestock. Their next residence was a farm near Elm Lake in Palmyra Township. The quads graduated from Frederick High School in 1949. Articles about the four children appeared in Aberdeen papers during those years, including one with photos of them in caps and gowns.

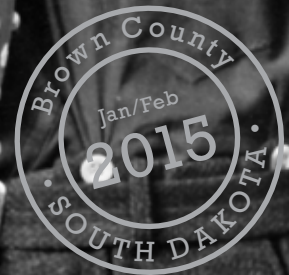
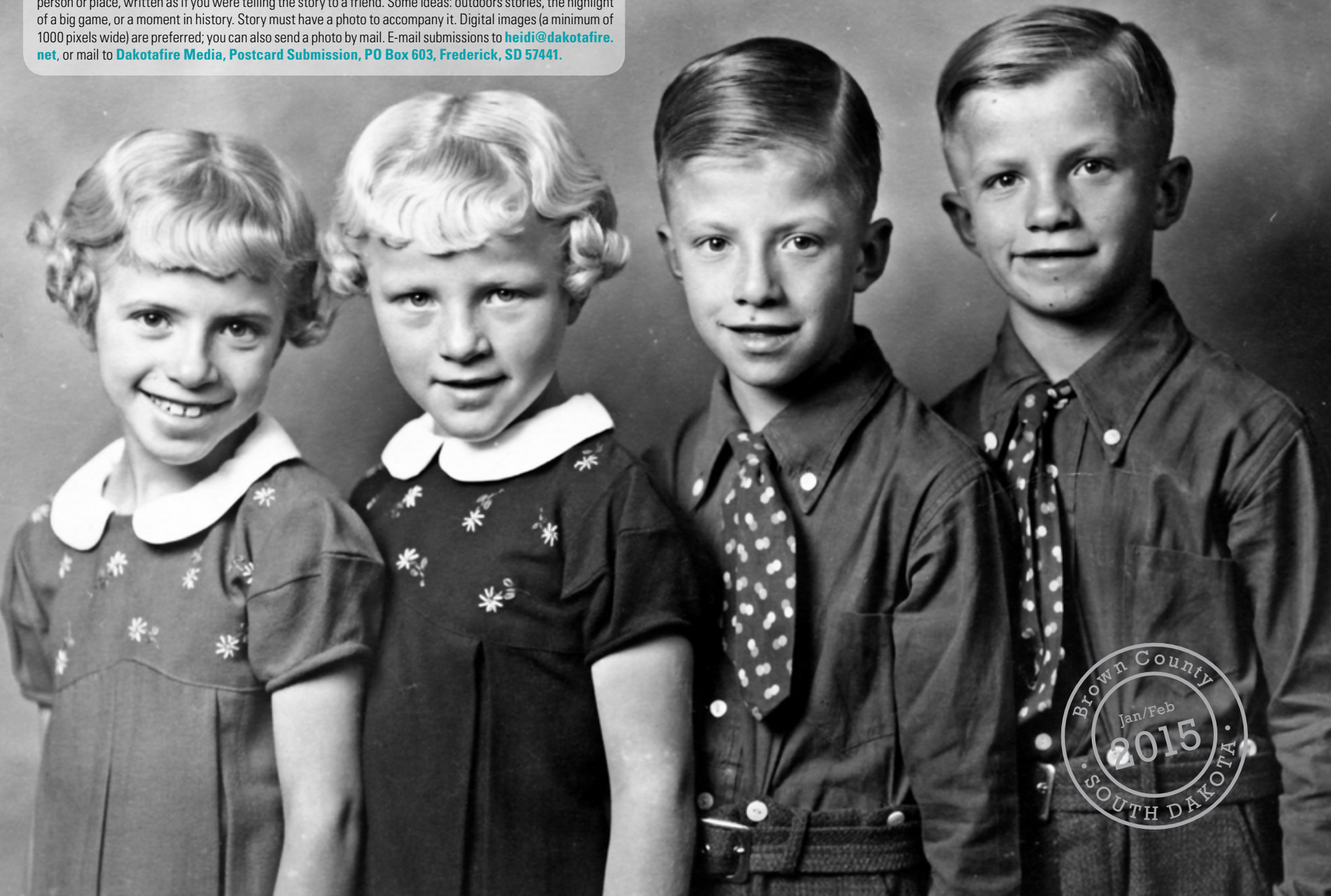
After graduation the girls, Jean and Joan, moved to Minneapolis to work and eventually marry. Jay and James continued to work on their father's farm. In 1952 when the quads reached 21, the \$1383 that was held in trust for them was distributed to the four. The boys stated that they would use their funds to buy livestock for the family farm. Eventually Jay and James left their father's farm. Jay of Green Bay, Wisconsin, married Rita Bauer in 1957 and had four children. James of Kalamazoo, Mich., married Helen Klimmeck in 1960 and had two daughters. Jean married Dan Russell and had a daughter. Joan married Donald Scott and had four children.

On March 31, 2003, the last of the quads, Jean Russell died in Santa Clara, Calif. Joan Scott passed away of rheumatic fever at the age of 40. James was 41 when he succumbed to a heart attack, and Jay died from a skull fracture at the age of 43. Jean, the last surviving quad, lived to be 72. *

Emily Jessup Guhin of Aberdeen, S.D., is the author of Children Are People, a book documenting the impact that Michael Miles Guhin had on rural education, published in 2012. The book is for sale at the Dacotah Prairie Museum in Aberdeen.

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