

News Release

Small Places and Leaders

By Cassandra Morthera on Monday, August 12, 2019

We were back in our hometown for the celebration of the sesquicentennial. We hadn't planned on being there but the death of a beloved aunt precipitated the trip to Iowa. As the parade made its way through the street, the faces were familiar and most of the businesses in the parade were owned by family names I knew. A sense of belonging and knowing all would be OK came over me. While the generations have changed and the old school house I attended was being demolished behind the parade route, I could have been sad for what had been, but instead I was delighted to see the changes and progress in this little town.

The community had come together to put on a celebration of its past. Leadership had emerged and accepted the call using the local talents and great volunteers. Like many small towns across the U.S., there could be a sense of acknowledgement that its best days are behind it. Rather many communities such as Crookston, my hometown, and others across the country are defining their own destinies. You see, it is about leadership and a will to realistically assess the situation and determine what the next chapter will look like. Rural America is alive and actively providing a quality of life unparalleled to most other places to live and raise a family. The values and the opportunity to develop individuals and challenge them to become leaders is a core tenet of rural places.

My home county of 9,000 people is home to an Olympic gold medalist, a NASA shuttle pilot, and George Gallup (perhaps you've heard of the Gallup Poll). I would venture to say many rural communities can tell similar stories of people who achieved and contributed to society and the world. For instance, when I interviewed for the position at the University of Minnesota Crookston, I shared the story of a person I had worked with at the University of Connecticut who was the head of the aerospace research for Pratt and Whitney. He had grown up and received his education in a little one-room schoolhouse in southern Missouri. University of Minnesota Crookston's own accomplished scientist Dan Svedarsky, Dr. Ed Crow (the rocket scientist) and another Ph.D. expert were all in the same class of three students. As noted above, people coming from a small, rural place can be and are successful because people believe in them and help mentor and develop their leadership capabilities.

Vice Chancellor Hoffman and I are both from small places, as are many of our students at the University of Minnesota Crookston. Our leadership team at the University of Minnesota Crookston believes all students should have access to a quality education and be given the opportunity to grow and develop, even if their high school class was small or there are only 400 people in their hometown. We work hard to ensure all of students are successful and provided the opportunity to lead.

Sincerely,

Chancellor Holz-Clause

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