

"Building Community Pride"

There was an expression that I heard as a youngster time and again from my mother - "We may not have much money but that is no reason for not having your shoes polished and your clothes clean". What she was doing (without me knowing or understanding at the time) was building pride and confidence in her son. These key elements are important in making a person successful and a contributor to society. They are also the "glue" that makes your community stick together resulting in healthy and prosperous town.

How does a community build that sense of pride? With some communities it comes from their ethnic backgrounds of the residents. Certain Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and German communities in Iowa take pride in their record of cleanliness and beauty. It has given them a sense of well being and vitality. Presenting your best face to the public tells the visitor that you care about property and each other. It indicates that you have a sense of respect for others and it reflects in every resident's commitments to improving the community.

Those communities that take pride in their town often win awards and recognition for their beauty and cleanliness. More importantly they also tend to be the communities that are economically healthy. They become attractive places to reside, raise a family and grow a business. Resident's attitudes become positive as they walk around the town or drive through the various neighborhoods. You feel good about what you see. If you live in a community that has little regard for its surroundings individuals living there will tend to have a negative attitude and not feel good about themselves or the town. Equally important is that potential investors in the community will develop the same attitude and invest in another community with pride.

Pride spreads and it is contagious. One individual, one family, one neighborhood can and do influence others and soon the pride becomes community wide. The painting of a building, removal or demolition of rundown buildings, the rebuilding of a fence, the removal of trash and debris from the back yard, removing weeds and cleaning up a vacant lot, planting flowers, trees and shrubs along a street or in a park, fixing up the city square, removing or renewing signs, picking up litter from roadways, parking lots, parks and school grounds, supporting Main Street efforts and beautifying the entrances to your community are all elements of how we can start building pride in our communities. Careful - pride can spread!

Keep Iowa Beautiful is committed to helping Iowans build community pride. We hope you will take the time to learn more about our organization and how we can help you get started and how you can be a part of state and community beautification programs and projects.

To obtain additional information on the organization please contact:

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See you in the next column featuring "The Business Connection".

Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director

P.S. *Don't forget the Keep Iowa Beautiful check-off when doing your State income tax!*