

Small Town Quality

Driving around Iowa frequently takes you through the small towns that often bring back memories or thoughts of rural farm life in Iowa. Many times the image of these small towns is one of abandoned buildings, property in decay along with weeds and debris. Often the unattractiveness of the community can be likened to a cancer that is slowly attacking and destroying the town. It seems as though no one cares about the disease or the decline – unattractive areas become acceptable. Many of us have seen those communities and are bothered by the lack of local pride and respect.

In June on a trip to northwest Iowa to the town of Linn Grove (population 211) my wife and I had a great experience. The town is located on the wooded hillside of a beautiful valley along the Little Sioux River. It is easy to imagine why early settlers selected the site – it has a natural beauty and all of the assets needed for settlement. Today it has a short main street, a few business buildings, city center building, a new bridge and a low-head dam on the river in a park area on the north edge of town (the grist mill is long gone).

Most importantly it has a great set of local citizen leaders determined to make the community continue to be attractive, clean and viable. Old buildings have been taken down, others preserved, streets are clean, the annual festival is successful and a new miniature mill and park have been developed along the main street. It gives the feeling that the town and its people care and are working hard to keep Linn Grove as a small viable community.

Two people that are helping lead the way in that effort are Mayor Dennis Graesing and City Clerk Becky Jessen. They are guiding the development, seeing that public nuisances are dealt with, buildings taken down, new businesses are encouraged and that the community looks attractive and healthy. At times the job is not easy because it is a small town and it would be easy to fall into “letting things go” because of a friendship or relationship with the individual causing the problem. In a large town you can often “hide” from those problems. In a small town they are “in your face” all the time.



Keep Iowa Beautiful Check-off Linn Grove Check Presentation
Becky Jessen – City Clerk, Dennis Graesing – Mayor and
Gerry Schnepf – Executive Director of Keep Iowa Beautiful.

These two individuals, along with the apparent support of the city council are showing a sense of pride and commitment to the community and standing behind it. Dennis and Becky are models for other small towns – they exude a “can do” attitude. They make it fun and exciting to go into a community where pride is worn on your sleeve.

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See you in the next column.

Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful

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