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Creating community goals

By Kari Stump
Editor

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"If you think you are beaten, you are; If you think you dare not, you don't; If you would like to win, but you think you can't it's almost a cinch, you won't; Because life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster man; Sooner or later, the person that wins is the one who says, I CAN!!"

Jack Schultz, author of "Boomtown USA: the 7 1/2 Keys to Big Success in Small Towns" concluded his presentation Thursday, Oct. 27 with the above poem Spirit of the Agurbs by an anonymous author.

The book discusses the 7 1/2 keys that transform small towns, such as Branson, Mo. and Columbus, Ind., into Boomtowns.

According to "Boomtown USA: the 7 1/2 Keys to Big Success in Small Towns," "You'll find Columbus in the center of a triangle formed by Indianapolis, Louisville and Cincinnati. With an economy based on farming and milling, it slowly grew in the last half of the 19th century and was not really distinguishable from any other small Midwestern town. Then, in 1942, the First Christian Church dedicated its new building designed by Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen. This structure, which signaled the beginning of modern architecture in Columbus, was followed in the 1950s by construction of a new bank, also designed by Saarinen and a school."

"In 1957, J. Irwin Miller, chairman of the board of the Cummins Engine Company, now Cummins Inc., headquartered in Columbus, offered to pay the architect's fee for any new school designed by an architect from a list compiled by the Cummins Engine Foundation, now The Cummins Foundation. This vision for high-quality architecture expanded to include public buildings and churches. Columbus now has more than 65 buildings- including a hospital, city hall, post office, jail, public housing, library and even a fire station- designed by world-renowned architects."

"Spurred by the vision of a few, Columbus changed its look so radically and with such style, that the American Institute of Architects has listed it sixth in the nation for architectural innovation and design- behind Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Boston and Washington D.C. Not bad company for a city of 39,000. And all it took to get started was one person's vision."

While Columbus, Ind., only took one person's vision to put it in the top six architecturally in the nation, 4 Blackford County has groups of people working together and coming up with plans to improve the quality of life for Blackford County citizens in areas including: community development, countywide communications, economic development, image/beautification, life long learning, recreation and leisure and social service issues.

"It only takes one or two strong people to raise up a community," Schultz said.

Action plans were created at the Oct. 27 meeting, and Jim Dittoe from Winning Communities plans to help 4 Blackford County implement at least two or three of them before his job is finished.

Schultz discussed how in small towns people often think since they play together on Friday nights, they can't work together. Then, when something great does happen in a small town, it doesn't receive national media coverage, unlike in large towns.

"Often communities come to forks in the road where they have to make key decisions," Schultz said.

Some of the key decisions made at the 4 Blackford County meetings include goals that will provide the quality of life and bring the Hartford City and Montpelier communities together as one.

"The pride in Montpelier out does us 10 to one," former Blackford High School art teacher John Adams said.

One of the recreational goals is to build a county park including softball parks, pool and picnic area at a neutral location, possibly near the high school.

Before being able to take on a large project will require trust.

"I'm astounded by the lack of trust," Blackford County YMCA Director Dave Bustos said.

An additional goal is a possible theater.

As far as countywide communication goes, the mayors Dennis Whitesell and Jim McPherson, along with the rest of the committee decided it would be a good idea to have community wide meetings including boards such as the city and county councils, commissioners and chambers, quarterly.

Another goal is to try to develop a database to stay in contact with Blackford High School graduates, who graduated in the top half of his or her class.

The next 4 Blackford County meeting will be Nov. 10 at 7 p.m. at the Lake Placid Conference Center.