

Great Community Get-Together is a positive start

Kristin Chitwood, Walker
The Pilot-Independent

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The Great Community Get-Together, Walker Area Partners, Healthy Community Initiative, the Minnesota Design Team. What is all this, who are these people and why do we keep hearing these titles?

First and foremost I think there's an appropriate expression that applies: It's all good! I jumped on board with The Walker Area Partners last December because I really believe in this initiative and everyone that is involved, including you.

Walker Area Partners was formed as a result of the city of Walker receiving a Healthy Communities grant from the Healthy Community Partnership out of Little Falls. The initial grant is \$10,000 that is being used to plan the Great Community Get-Together June 10 and 11, as well as sponsoring the Minnesota Design Team to visit that same weekend. The rest of the grant — \$40,000 — will be used to fulfill the goals set by the community members. The Walker Area Partners is a group of 60-plus people from all walks of life from the education community, clergy, retired citizens, business people, parents and concerned citizens.

This is where you come in. And I mean ALL OF YOU. I assume if you're reading this letter, you are somehow involved in this community, and whether you live here year-round or seasonally, I know you have an opinion as to how this community should grow and what areas we need to work on. The Walker Area Partners want to hear about all concerns, not just the business or economy issues, but all issues from housing to our youth. That's what Friday night (June 10) at Moondance Fairgrounds is all about. You will all have the opportunity to give your opinions in a fun, positive, nonthreatening environment led by the Minnesota Design Team and you will prioritize the goals for our five-year plan .. and you will be served a wonderful free fish dinner.

Saturday night at 7 p.m. in the WHA Auditorium, the Minnesota Design Team will give a presentation of their ideas with drawings and other visuals. Let me stress something here. We won't necessarily use all or any of their ideas, however, their "blind eye perspective" of our area will be invaluable. How often does a town our size have 16-20 professional landscape designers, city planners, etc., visit and spend three days just to help improve their community? Why not hear their ideas and see if it's something we can do?

So why wouldn't you attend? How can you lose? Free fish dinner, a fun time with friends and neighbors, and the opportunity to help move this community in a positive direction. To me it's a "no-brainer."

If you're still with me, I want to get on my soap box for just a minute. We are all tied together, folks. And in a community our size we all have to work together. Why not attend this visioning session and give your two cents? You may have a wonderful idea that no one has thought of yet. All the Walker Area Partners want to do is hear your ideas and actually create a task force to accomplish the community goals. Yes, we guarantee there will be follow through.

I think we often forget how tied together we really are. Everything we do has an impact on someone else. This phenomenon is so perfectly illustrated in the book, "The Five People You meet in Heaven," by Mitch Albom. Every decision and action you do each and every day, affects another, and another, many years into the future. There are many examples that come to mind. What happens when you choose to volunteer for an organization even though you are busy, shop locally 20 percent more of the time, slow down and stop for pedestrians in downtown Walker, pause your hectic schedule and check on the neighbor next door, make a float for the local parades? What happens is you make a positive contribution to your community that makes the Walker Area a better place to live, to raise our children, and more welcoming to our "guests." (I love this term Pastor Mark Olson uses for tourist.)

The key words mentioned above are "work" and "together." This is the reality of it and, yes, it takes work and time that nobody has enough of. I think this community has come so far in so many ways, and we owe it to those who served before us and ourselves. I do love this community, almost as much as my father (Willard Arends), and I believe in the people who live here. We have the potential to do wonderful things. Hope to see you Friday and Saturday.

If you need any information, please call me at 547-2023 or 224-3462, or e-mail www.WalkerAreaPartners.com.

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For more information on this subject, check out these resources:

- [Walker Area Partners](#)

