

Community Development Corner

Nov. 28th, 2018

Now that Thanksgiving is over and Christmas is right around the corner, I thought it might be fun to review what I am thankful for in 2018 and my wish list for Red Cloud for 2019. Before I do that though, I wanted to remind everyone that time is running out to donate to the Rural Development Philanthropy Challenge which will help the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund build its Legacy Endowment. As of this writing, RCCFF still needs \$54,600 to reach its goal—this amount will be matched by the Sherwood Foundation 50% meaning we could add an additional \$27,300 from this outside source for the future of the community.

Obviously then, I am thankful for the dozens of individuals and families whom have already donated to the RCCFF campaign. The Barta and Arneson families have donated nearly \$34,000 towards our campaign and our own board has donated close to \$30,000. I'm also thankful to NextEra Energy for their donation of \$15,000. RCCFF will honor all donors to this campaign publically at the next Community Banquet and will recognize all donations over \$5000 as members of the 1871 Club as we truly believe donors to this campaign will leave a legacy that the people who founded our community in 1871 would be proud of.

I am also thankful for all the people who continue to care about the future of this community, whether they can afford to give \$1 or \$1 million, for all the critical volunteer work that ensures that Red Cloud is a vibrant community with the potential to grow in the future. I'm thankful to the City of Red Cloud, the Willa Cather Foundation, RCCFF, and the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce for their continued support of Heritage Tourism. I am also thankful for my family for putting up with long hours of work and travel and for just being awesome in general.

Here's my Christmas wishlist: First and foremost I wish peace, prosperity, and happiness for everyone. But to get more specific, here are 5 things I would like to see happen in Red Cloud in 2019: 1) Funding in place to begin construction on the Garber Block Hotel Project. If you're interested in being an investor, we will have some encouraging financial projections and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss them with you in more detail. 2) I would like to see our downtown buildings get closer to being full and for empty spaces to be put to better use. I would love to see a learning center/meeting space set up of some sort, a gift shop that sells Red Cloud and Nebraska/Kansas based products as well as those niche items that it doesn't make sense for other stores here to carry (I'm thinking here a whole rack of items from Hardy Coffee in Omaha or the Grain Place in Marquette, or any number of items from Rasser Farms just for three examples—it could also be a place for FFA members to sell things they grow, local farmers and artisans, etc). I also think we need to get more creative about the use of some buildings—if they are in too bad of shape maybe that's an opportunity to create outdoor seating and green space or to even decorate them with murals.

3) Beyond tourism and retail, I'd love for a small industrial outfit to consider Red Cloud. It may, (knock on wood) be time to revisit ethanol as an option given the Trump administration's decision to allow year round sales of 15% ethanol blends. I know we tried that before and it fizzled out, but when I see the success of places like Atkinson, Albion, Cambridge, and Ord and how having the ethanol plant is tied into some of the retail and tourism success they've been able to accomplish, it's hard not get a little envious. 4) Somebody needs to pull the trigger on a Red Cloud Brewpub and/or buy Shades West and turn it into

an Outfitters store (like Dick's Sporting Goods, but on a smaller scale and maybe focusing on hunting/fishing). Imagine too, the branding possibilities with a RC brewery—everything from Starke Round Barn Stouts to My Antonia Czech Pilsners and more—if someone here doesn't do it soon someone else is going to, 5) I want to see us all work together for a better Red Cloud and figure out how we can move forward even if we don't necessarily agree on what we should prioritize. Here's to open, honest, and direct communication and less assumptions. I also want all the pigeons to die or fly down into Kansas—the USDA is working on that.