

Riverside Links Celebrates Its 5th Anniversary

In 2012 a group of community leaders from Macedonia, Carson, and Oakland worked through the Home Town Competiveness initiative to improve the quality of life in our small towns. The goal was to link the three communities with the common purpose of equipping leaders, supporting local entrepreneurs, encouraging community philanthropy and involving and engaging our youth.

Some accomplishments while “linking” our communities:

- **Website:** Nancy Raney was charged with the task of developing a website and Facebook page which she maintains to this day. She posts community events and has developed a business directory which she is working to update this spring. She asks that community members check out the website riversidelinks.com to provide her with needed information about changes she can make. Homebased businesses are encouraged to join the directory. The site has a space for comments.
- **Riverside Backpack Program:** The first project for youth was the Riverside Backpack Program. Links worked with the local elementary school to submit the necessary paperwork to the Heartlands Food Bank to begin the program. Macedonia UMW made an initial donation. The program itself is administered by the staff of the elementary and intermediate schools. Every week 18 children receive shelf stable food that is put in their backpacks on Friday afternoon for the weekend. The food bank delivers the packets to the school.
- **Helping Our Community:** Jody Pendgraft is in charge of philanthropy. She's often seen making “Lemon-Aide” to help others. Joan Scott has suggested a scholarship for a Riverside graduate who has successfully completed the Pottawattamie Promise program at IWCC if they want to continue their education.
- **Youth Workshops:** Two other projects for our young people are the writing and art workshops held for elementary students.
 - **Writing:** Eckles Library works with Riverside Links to host a three-weekend writing workshop where participants write pieces to be published in a book. Promise Partners, a Pottawattamie County youth alliance, helps support this effort. This year the workshop dates are April 22, 29, and May 6.
 - **“Art in the Park”** is a series of four workshops held in each of the three communities and at the Pottawattamie County Fair. During Donia Day the art is displayed in the Pioneer Trails Museum. The tentative dates for this summer are June 15, 29, July 22, and August 3. The Lions Club Can Corral provides funding and children pay a small fee. Another way we support art education is by placing Riverside students' work around the communities.

- **Little Libraries:** Working with the industrial arts department at Riverside High School, Little Libraries were put in three locations in Carson, the only one of the three communities without a library for checking out books. Marilyn Mickey checks to make sure books are available in each location. Many people have donated gently-used good books for the project.
- **Community Service Day:** Each year we find worksites and community volunteers for the Jr. High and High School Community Service Day. It is scheduled for April 26 this year. Contact Gayle Strickland, our website, or high school coordinator Holly Garcia before April 15 if you have a job that needs done that day. Snacks will be provided at a central location in each town when the workday is complete. From these locations, buses will pick up the young volunteers to return to school.
- **Christmas Light Tour:** In December we sponsor a Christmas Lights bus tour. Riders are picked up in each town and then they get to see light displays. The past two years the group has been treated to cookies and coffee at Colleen Wilbur's depot building in Carson before being dropped off. It's an opportunity to see this delightfully decorated part of our history.
- **Small Business Promotion:** The latest initiative the group wants to tackle is highlighting local small and home-based businesses. In an effort to promote entrepreneurship, which is the backbone of economic development in our small towns, we have started a conversation with Lori Holste, Western Iowa Development Assn. (WIDA) Director. We will have a display of business cards at the Pioneer Trails Museum on April 1 and 2, to correspond with Grist Mills' matinees of "The Butler Did it." Bud Noble, nature photographer, is the highlighted entrepreneur for this event. Please submit your business cards to Gayle Strickland (712-482-3436) by March 29 to included in our display.

The next Riverside Links meeting is 9:30 am on April 19 at the Sugar Shack in Carson. We are always considering new ideas and would welcome others who would like to get involved.

"Link" with us at riversidelinks.com!