

# Keep Iowa Beautiful®

Summer 2018

## Summertime

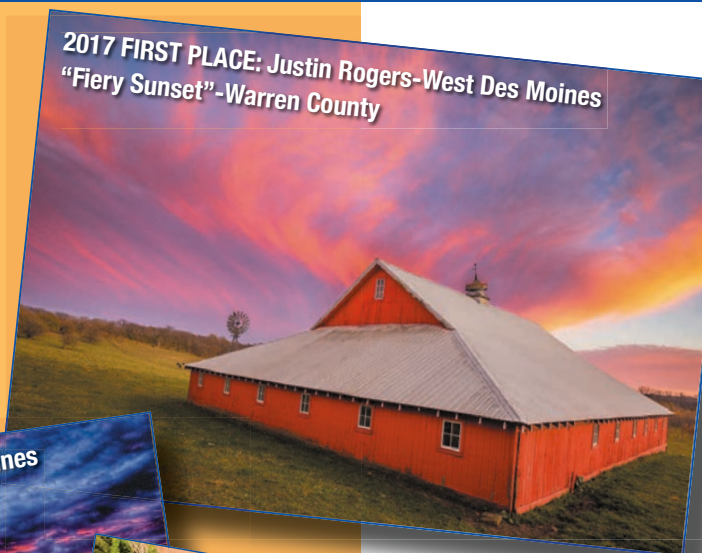
### A GREAT TIME TO ENTER KIB'S PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Have already taken a photo of your favorite place in Iowa? If you have not, summertime is a great time to grab your camera and take that shot and enter it in Keep Iowa Beautiful's 9th Photography Contest aimed at raising awareness of Iowa's rural and urban beauty. This photo contest offers both amateur and experienced photographers an opportunity to tell Iowa's story in a fun, engaging way during your favorite season.

"This is a great way for 'Iowa lovers' to share what they like about Iowa," said Gerry Schnepf, KIB Executive Director. "First place will receive \$50, second place \$40 and third \$30." Each winner will also receive a one-year subscription Our Iowa magazine.

The deadline is December 14, 2018 and entries must be submitted as high resolution JPEG electronically to [bjackson@keepiowabeautiful.com](mailto:bjackson@keepiowabeautiful.com). \$5 entry fee, contest rules and payment can be made at <https://www.keepiowabeautiful.com/photography-contest-entry/>

2017 FIRST PLACE: Justin Rogers-West Des Moines  
"Fiery Sunset"-Warren County



2017 SECOND PLACE: Dale Hlavacek-Des Moines  
"Sunrise at the State Capitol"



2017 THIRD PLACE: Robert Felderman-Dubuque  
"Spring Planting"-Dubuque County



## INSIDE

Iowa State Fair .....	Page 2
Iowa Grocers Award .....	Page 2
Small Cities Resurrection .....	Page 3-5
Coaches Corner .....	Page 5-7

## Keep Iowa Beautiful

authored a three-part series for the Iowa League of Cities' Cityscape Magazine on critical issues facing small cities and how dialogue and policy could reverse negative trends. The stories were authored by Cityscape's Mickey Shield and KIB's Micholyn Fajen and Gerry Schnepf. We're pleased to share excerpts of those articles on pages 3-6.





#### Board of Trustees

**Miriam Erickson Brown**  
Chairman

**Kevin Techau**  
Vice-Chairman

**Donald F. Lamberti**  
Honorary Co-Chair

**Robert D. Ray**  
Honorary Co-Chair

**vacant**  
Secretary

**Doug Shull**  
Treasurer

---

**Jeff Badger**

**Anthony J. Colosimo**

**Steven Falck**

**Tom Hanafan**

**Geri Huser**

**Megan Jones**

**Reo Menning**

**Brandon Neilson**

**Noreen Otto**

**Mike Richardson**

**Loretta Sieman**

**Scott Smith**

**Marcia Wannamaker**

**Inky Westfall**

#### Staff/Consultants

**Gerald F. Schnepf**  
Executive Director  
515-323-6507

**William H. Jackson**  
Executive Assistant  
515-323-6537

**vacant**  
Education Consultant

#### Hometown Pride Coaches

**Francis Boggus** - Clinton County  
515-822-1434

**Jeff Davidson** - Jasper County  
319-541-7048

**Lorin Ditzler** - Warren County  
515-442-0723

**Kathy Evert** - Sac County  
712-260-8746

**Doug Friedli** - Fremont County  
402-873-2215

**David Heiar** - GWMRR Counties  
563-599-1223

**Beth Hicks** - Capitol Neighborhood  
515-556-0586

**Margo Underwood** - Pocahontas County  
641-420-3896

[www.keepiowabeautiful.com](http://www.keepiowabeautiful.com)

## KIB AT THE IOWA STATE FAIR

Keep Iowa Beautiful needs your help staffing the booth at the Iowa State Fair. Once again we are in the air-conditioned Varied Industries Building. August 9-19, 2018. Shifts available are: 9:00AM-1:00PM, 1:00-5:00PM and 5:00-9:00PM. Two people per shift. KIB will provide \$12 gate admission and a T-Shirt.

Sign up is on the internet, fast and simple!

1. Simply sign up (register) each individual online at <http://bit.ly/StateFair2018>
2. Select your preferred shift.
3. Indicate your t-shirt size
4. Each person on a shift needs to complete all the important information
5. Hit "Submit" and a confirmation will come to your email.
6. A reminder with ticket(s), T-Shirt and booth activities will be sent around Aug. 1.

If you have questions or are having trouble signing up on the internet, e-mail [bjackson@keepiowabeautiful.com](mailto:bjackson@keepiowabeautiful.com)



## IOWA GROCERS AWARD BUILD WITH BAGS GRANTS

City parks and schools throughout Iowa will soon have new park benches, planters or picnic tables courtesy of the Iowa Grocery Industry Association's Build with Bags program. 11 Iowa communities received grants of up to \$2,000 to purchase items made from recycled plastic bags. Items include park benches made by Plastic Recycling of Iowa Falls. One park bench represents approximately 10,600 bags that won't end up in the landfill.



"We are pleased to announce the winners of the Build with Bags grant program," says Michelle Hurd, president of the Iowa Grocery Industry Association. "Now in its ninth year, the Build with Bags program continues to encourage individuals to recycle their plastic bags so those bags can be turned into products that beautify our communities. This year's grant winners are reaping the rewards of their recycling efforts, and we hope other communities will follow suit and expand their recycling efforts."

Store representatives throughout the state wrote letters of support that led to their communities being selected to receive a grant. "While the endorsement letter was not the most weighted category in the selection process, it is an important component of the Build with Bags program," Hurd explains. "In the program committee's eyes, it reflects how the applying community is working with its local grocers to establish long-term projects and goals that help increase the awareness of plastic bag recycling."

Awards were made to Alden, Sioux City (3), DeSoto, Williamsburg, Sheldon, Sac City, Urbandale, Corydon and Fort Atkinson.

Participating retailers include Fareway Stores and Hy-Vee locations statewide plus many independent grocers. Build with Bags, a cooperative effort of the Iowa Grocery Industry Association, Keep Iowa Beautiful, Metro Waste Authority in Des Moines, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Plastic Recycling of Iowa Falls, was originally launched in August 2009. Now in its ninth year, the Build with Bags Grant program has awarded \$305,461.52 in grants to more than 180 Iowa communities.

For more information on Build with Bags or its grant program opportunities, visit [www.keepiowabeautiful.com](http://www.keepiowabeautiful.com) or [www.iowagrocers.com](http://www.iowagrocers.com).



# SMALL CITIES RESURRECTION

History offers Americans a glimpse backwards to better days, lessons learned and significant turning points in time. But history notates where we were and with small-town Iowa of yesteryear largely gone, we're forced to face new realities and move forward.

The story is similar across America with the echoing attitude of "adapt or die" for our small towns. As industry shifts our rising generations move to more fruitful regions, leaving smaller communities to lay victim to the draining of their younger, educated, and opportunistic individuals.

We believe we need to start a different conversation focused on the critical issues that need to be addressed to build on the best qualities of small communities for the future, rather than the past.

## Connecting with Technology

Thanks to the "Connect Every Acre" bill passed during the 2015 state legislative session, Iowa achieved some success in stretching broadband technology to rural areas. But understanding what it means to have access versus high speed is best defined as having Internet access that is too slow to stream programming or even download files from an email. The majority of our state doesn't have internet fast enough to deliver the speed today's growing cities and businesses need. The Federal Communications Commission defines broadband as a 25 Mbps download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed, (often called 25 down, 3 up).

According to those standards, Iowa is grossly underserved, and our small cities stand on the digital divide.

Jonna Loewe is a Farm Bureau agent in Sidney, a community of 1,200 in southwest Iowa. She said poor internet connections are a barrier to attracting new residents and retaining current residents and prevent new companies from expanding to these communities. Consider, too, that broadband is often the only conduit to search and apply for jobs and a key portal for gaining new skills.

But local leaders don't want to wait for high-speed, they want to leap frog to fiber, the latest in internet technology which costs about \$13,000/mile to lay in rural areas and \$30,000/mile in residential areas. Connecting into these lines costs between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per business or residential customer.

This is indicative of many small cities and rural parts of our state. If proactive steps aren't taken through funding, subsidy programs and government attention, the digital divide will continue to separate rural Iowa even further from welcoming back and retaining millennials, businesses, and industry.



## Dressing up Derelict Buildings

Some cities have a great welcome mat attracting visitors. Historic places, adorable main streets and hometown festivals offer the quaint, Midwest charm to feed a hungry soul.

Epidemic to other small cities are vacant, unoccupied, and often unsafe buildings - eyesores that give visitors the wrong



impression. The City of Madrid identifies 12 derelict buildings blemishing the family-friendly community on the edge of the Des Moines metro and the well-traveled High Trestle Trail.

More than identifying neglected buildings, Madrid Mayor Dirk Ringgenberg said it's a tedious process weighed down by attorney fees, a lack of judges to hear these cases and loopholes in due process that have Madrid at the mercy of these forgotten properties.

Derelict buildings are not only an eyesore, they can be detrimental to an entire neighborhood by pushing property values down, causing health and public safety issues and diminishing community pride.

## **DERELICT BUILDINGS SURVEY SHOWS CITIES FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE**

A recent survey conducted by the League of Cities in conjunction with Keep Iowa Beautiful illustrated challenges city officials face with derelict buildings. The survey, emailed to over 900 city clerks, received 196 responses.

### **Key Findings**

The important takeaways from the survey:

- 74% said the derelict buildings issue is important to their community, compared to 26% who consider it neutral or less important.
- 13% reported a decreasing number of derelict buildings while more than 75% said the number was the same or increasing.
- When asked for the primary reasons for buildings becoming derelict, nearly 36% said absentee ownership, 22% cited a limited budget while 15% pointed to an inability to enforce nuisance and property codes. (Other answers included a lack of community pride, unwillingness to enforce nuisance and property codes, and lack of a nuisance or property maintenance codes.)
- 61% said their city didn't have funding for derelict buildings, while many others reported their city budgeted for some related work, but not enough to fully address the issue.

The survey highlighted the "vicious cycle" derelict buildings can create – as a property's value declines due to its derelict status, the properties surrounding them are also likely to see a decrease in value. Lower property values result in fewer property tax dollars sent to the city budget, thus reducing the city's ability to adequately fund community development work to address derelict buildings.

Others cited the loss of residents and businesses, which contributes to a reduction in city resources while exacerbating the problem of abandoned homes and buildings. These losses, respondents said, can also lead to public safety issues and damaged community pride.

Numerous responses showed cities making progress, noting their council had a renewed focus on the issue and budgeted added resources to tackle derelict properties, including establishing a dedicated fund for derelict projects and using Local Option Sales Tax revenue, gaming revenue and other sources.

## **SHIFTING FROM "SURVIVE" TO "THRIVE"**

The front lines of Iowa's small city survival are reinforced by dedicated business owners, community leaders and visionaries, impassioned residents, and families hungry for small-town values, safety, opportunity, and accessibility.

A success story is Newton, IA that stood on the teetering edge too many cities fall victim to when a major corporation or business exits the community. Maytag's exit propelled Newton and emphasized the critical need to engage the right people before it is too late. Newton chose to focus on the opportunity rather than uncertainty. In the 10 years since Maytag's exit, the city replaced all the jobs lost as new companies entered the community. A willingness to be progressive and take risks is what sets sustained communities apart from others and Newton succeeded in being future-focused.

For the unincorporated community of Percival, Iowa, investing in the future meant establishing a foundation to support long-term enhancement of the community that was nearly destroyed during the 2011 flood. Their 78-strong population raised \$54,000 in grants and private donations to restore their community park and replant trees lost to the flood. A private \$10,000 donation established a permanent unrestricted endowment to sustain Percival's future.

Evidence of fruitfulness is sometimes big and bold like the visible facelifts buildings and community facilities get through the more than 8,900 gallons of paint awarded to community projects by Keep Iowa Beautiful and Diamond Vogel Paint.



But big change can also come from small communities focused on driving economic development, improving features in their community for visitors or enhancing the quality of life for their own residents. Consider the small, but vibrant city of Varina in Pocahontas County that with a population of 73 transformed its signature city park into an active playground with new equipment, a renovated basketball court, shelter house with new trees and landscaping thanks to gathering over \$121,000 in grants and donations.

When we come together as a community, we can truly make effective changes to improve our town,” said Faith Balo, Varina Hometown Pride Committee Chair.

The energy and commitment of leaders and community members rallying for their hometown can be contagious, inspiring others to buy-in and move the needle.

### Setting a New Stage

Keep Iowa Beautiful is encouraged by the future of small-town Iowa thanks to Governor Reynolds’ statement in the Condition of the State Address. “I believe the heart, soul, and spirit of Iowa will always remain in our small towns and rural communities...Our goal: to keep and bring home Iowa’s sons and daughters and grow the next generation of community leaders.”

We couldn’t agree more about the important focus on growing community leaders that are pivotal to their success.



## HOMETOWN PRIDE COACHES CORNER

*Building Stronger Communities – Developing Sustainable Futures*

### Hometown Pride — Louisa County-Letts

\$150 raised by the Louisa – Muscatine Elementary School Sixth Graders for replacement flags at Civil War veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, Lt. William Reddick’s grave. Conner McKinney of Letts HiP and the Letts Cemetery Board accepted the donation.





# HOMETOWN PRIDE COACHES CORNER

*Building Stronger Communities – Developing Sustainable Futures*

## Hometown Pride — Jasper County-Mingo

Children of Mingo watch with anticipation as volunteers organized by Mingo Hometown Pride assemble new playground equipment for Mingo Community Park this past spring. Mingo Hometown Pride was awarded a \$7500 grant from the Jasper Community Foundation in 2017, which really lit a fire under Mingo Hometown Pride Committee members to acquire a new playground system which had been planned for years. The City contributed funds which had been earmarked in years past for playground improvements, and a second grant was awarded from the Geisler Foundation. Third and fourth grants have recently been awarded from Key Co-op and Land O' Lakes Foundation totaling \$1250.



## Hometown Pride — Grant Wood Mississippi River Region- Maquoketa

Littleton Brothers Memorial in Toolesboro. (All six brothers died from one thing or another during the Civil War.) The speaker is local historian Tom Woodruff with Gov Reynolds, Hometown Pride Coach Doug, Lt Gov. Gregg and Louisa Development Group Executive Director Angela Shipley.





# HOMETOWN PRIDE COACHES CORNER

*Building Stronger Communities – Developing Sustainable Futures*

## Hometown Pride – Fremont County-Percival

Barn Quilts On Display in Fremont County.

Percival Hometown Pride committee members are teaching people from across the County how to paint barn quilts. Four workshops have produced 72 barn quilts. The six 4-H Clubs in the County are each creating larger barn quilts that will be auctioned off at the County Fair.

A committee of Hometown Pride Committee volunteers from throughout the county are planning to create a barn quilt trail this Fall to attract tourists.



## Hometown Pride – Pocahontas County-Plover

This Plover community sign is located within the community along a frequently traveled county road. The new sign was installed last year, with the plan for new landscaping this year. Plover has a population of 77.



## Hometown Pride – Sac County-Lake View

The Lake View Hometown Pride committee and community celebrated with two ribbon-cuttings for two big projects. The first was the reconditioned bike Arch at the trailhead of the Sauk Rail Trail. The second the opening of the splash pad in the City Park. Following the ribbon-cutting at the splash pad Hometown Pride served free hot dogs chips cookies and drinks.







300 East Locust • Suite 100

Des Moines, Iowa 50309

**Return Service Requested**

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Waterloo, IA  
Permit No. 901

**Report Littering**

**1-888-N  LITTR**

*Keep Iowa  
Beautiful* 

**[ 6 6 5 - 4 8 8 7 ]**