

Our City

Last week I wrote about being gone for nearly 12 days, civil discourse and the diversity of our community. What I didn't include was that while I was gone the Agricultural Education program was not left unattended and that the City was in the very capable hands of its employees. You may recall in April I wrote about the announcement of the School District's hiring of Daniel Heikkila; a second fulltime Agriculture instructor and FFA advisor, and a subsequent conversation I had with School Board Chairman Bruce Hauber at the Willow Bay Cafe. Chairman Hauber told me, and rightfully so, that he expected to see twice the success and output from the program. I told him that he would; not knowing fully how soon the expectation would be realized.

On August 3rd I received a phone call from Clara-Leigh Evans the Executive Director of the Idaho FFA Association. She told me the American Falls FFA Chapter was selected as a top ten finalist for the Models of Excellence Award; making our chapter the only chapter in the State's history to be recognized as such (for more details see the article submitted by our Chapter Secretary Madison Udy). This recognition makes the expectations of Chairman Hauber very high indeed as there is no higher national recognition given to a chapter. Well, other than to be named the top chapter in the country. Of course our efforts locally will increase as they did over the course of this summer. I am sure that as some of you read this you are wondering what does any of this have to do with "Our City?" Don't fret I am fixing to tie it all together.

You see, while I was gone for those 12 days Daniel Heikkila was here working with students. In fact Daniel hasn't really stopped working here since he started his student-teaching last January. At a 4H and FFA Sale Committee meeting last February I volunteered the Ag students and FFA members to build 40 new lamb pens for the new sheep barn at the fairgrounds, not knowing if Daniel would even be here to help complete the project. Suffice it to say the promise would have been left empty were it not for the contributions of Heikkila and the community. For you see the barn would not have been constructed without the support of the County Commissioners and Fair Board. And, the pens would only be wishful thinking without the Fair Board, Sale Committee and the efforts of many students under the direction of Mr. Heikkila.

Over the course of the last five months, over 1000 volunteer hours went into the construction, painting and placement of the new pens. My most sincere thanks goes out to the following: Cameron Henesh, a senior at AFHS who worked fulltime in Pocatello and came into the shop routinely at 2:30 and worked until nearly midnight for over a month. To Colton Howell who will be a junior at AFHS who didn't have a summer job to begin with and did much of the welding through June but was hired away from the project by Double M Ag and Irrigation and who is according to Mark Mills, "Turning into a very good employee." To David Carrillo who will be a sophomore and who took a crash course in welding fabrication and helped through much of the project in his time off from his regular job. To Madison Udy a senior who did much of the painting of the panels. To Jeremy Henesh and Kyler Kriebel who will be freshmen, and Mike Henesh, the father of Cameron and Jeremy, who all pitched in where and when needed as we all burned the candle at both ends to complete the project.

Six “kids” gave up much of their summer “vacation” to complete a project that they had no vested interest in other than they wanted to help; five of the six didn’t even show or sell an animal at the fair while Madison Udy showed a steer. Who does that? Our community does it as a matter of routine almost it seems. To the volunteers who make up the 4H-FFA Sale Committee, the Fair Board and the County Commissioners, I extend my sincere appreciation.

Last Friday culminated the Power County Fair with the annual fat stock sale. Yet another record year for the support of our youth was realized. It has been my experience that you cannot have a great community without the buy-in from everyone. The support of our youth doesn’t just happen in our Ag program or at the fair. If you were at the fair you saw adults and students from American Falls, Rockland and Arbon Valley working toward the same goal. The efforts of many make successes like the Models of Excellence, a new barn, lamb pens and record sales at a county fair possible. The efforts of the whole make American Falls and Power County the best place to live and a place where anything truly may be possible.

Until next week...