

Clayton County

Foundation for the Future, Inc.

An Affiliate of the

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER DUBUQUE

As part of our mission to build stronger communities, we share recent research on welcoming and engaging young people and newcomers. As a leader, please share and review with your boards and councils as you seek to engage these groups.

Rural areas are changing, not dying. *Many rural communities are seeing a brain “gain,” rather than the brain “drain” we hear about, when people return to their hometowns to raise their families.*

- Design your own positive narrative about the high quality of life and benefits of living in small towns, rather than letting others tell your story.
- End disparaging remarks to newcomers and young people.
- Newcomers will come to appreciate history but also add their flavor to the community.

Living in the middle of everywhere. *No town is a one stop shop - we may work up to 30 minutes from home, eat and shop up to 45 minutes from home, and play two hours from home.*

- Rather than complaining, map your assets and amenities and embrace that we actually live in the “middle of EVERYWHERE.”
- Map access to jobs, schools, health care, dining, cultural attractions, outdoor recreation, shopping, and other quality of life elements.

Newcomers choose to move to rural communities for quality of life. *They are looking for the slower pace of life, safety, security, and low housing cost found in many rural communities.*

- Jobs are not the highest priority. Show what life is like outside of work.
- Young people and newcomers are building their community, creating groups, diversifying the economy, buying/starting businesses, working from home, and living in a *region* (not limited to one community).

Engaging newcomers and young people. *Look for people who are dedicated and focused to serve as board members.*

- Guideline: People should serve on no more than three boards at a time.
- Organizations often fall into a “warm body syndrome,” just to fill a seat at the table. Newcomers are not warm bodies; get to know them, find out their interests.
- Leadership styles and generational interests change, yet organizations don’t. Millennials have a decentralized approach for leadership and prefer simplified methods of communication (text message, email, Facebook).

Take Action: Be a bridge to people and the community. *Be a good ambassador and a stable connection between the old and new population.*

- Welcome newcomers. Identify and build upon their interests and skills.
- Start “Grab a Bite” programs where ambassadors reach out to newcomers over lunch.
- Host a supper just for newcomers and have high school students conduct brief interviews with attendees to find out why they chose to move to your community.
- Encourage excellent customer service; a first impression lasts.

Information summarized from research by Ben Winchester, Research Fellow at University of Minnesota Extension, and presented at the Welcome Home Summit, held in May 2018 in Edgewood. For more information, please visit www.dbqfoundation.org.

If your board/council seeks young members

- Get to know young professionals and newcomers and their interests before asking them to serve on a board they may feel no connection to.
- Young professionals prefer board/committee meetings to be action-oriented. An accomplished task is a reward, therefore action-oriented meetings where a task is accomplished during each meeting or between meetings is desired.
- To keep young professionals engaged, meetings should be timely and should stay on task. Young professionals have loaded schedules and appreciate the opportunity for leisure time and socializing, but may prefer to do that with a different cohort than the board or commission they voluntarily serve on. Young professionals like to focus on business at meetings so they can accomplish their tasks and move on to leisure time. Social functions should occur separately from business meetings, and meetings should last no longer than 45 minutes at a maximum.
- Give ideas an opportunity for growth rather than discouraging newcomers with statements like, “No, we’ve already tried that.” A new opportunity, new participants, and different circumstances may be a recipe for success and a valuable learning opportunity.
- Don’t be afraid to pass the torch to newcomers. Allow a young, incoming board member the opportunity to shadow an outgoing board member at a board meeting or two.

Information provided by the Upper Mississippi Under Forty Young Professionals. For more information on Upper Mississippi Under Forty, follow Upper Mississippi Under Forty on Facebook.

Clayton County Foundation for the Future Board of Directors:

Harry Blobaum Austin Coon Patti Gerner Darla Kelchen

Fran Passmore Andy Reimer LeAnn Watson J.P. Zapf

M.J. Smith, Director of Affiliate Foundations, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque

Coordinator: Emily Sadewasser

Email: cfff@dbqfoundation.org | **Phone:** 563.880.6044

Website: www.dbqfoundation.org | Follow us on Facebook