

Gratitude Flow #26: “Appreciating Our Community”

Hastings is a thriving place and one my family and I are grateful to be living in. By focusing on what we already have here, on what our community already does well, we are provided with the energy and the vision to keep moving forward as a community.

When I look for reasons to be grateful in my own life, they aren’t hard to find. When I look for reasons to be grateful for our community, they aren’t hard to find either. My husband and I moved here in 2000. We were initially attracted to the location because of the rivers, the historic downtown, and the ease we felt when we first visited here. That natural beauty and the efforts to preserve our history are two of Hastings’ greatest attributes. I look forward to the next couple of years and the ongoing revitalization of our downtown. I always appreciate going for a run on our many miles of trail, and look forward to witnessing the upcoming spring and summer seasons along those trails.

When talking about community, however, it is the people and services that truly make or break it. The people of Hastings support our schools, expecting both academic excellence and great co-curricular opportunities, and committing to the necessary funding to maintain such quality. We have reliable police, fire, and emergency personnel working to keep our community safe and helping in times of need. The health care available, our family Y, a local health food cooperative, a seasonal farmer’s market, the family aquatic center, our many parks, softball and baseball fields, winter ice rinks, and the already-mentioned trail system point to the community’s commitment to wellness.

Hastings also has a variety of services that a community our size is fortunate to have. Hastings Family Service and TLC Pregnancy Resource Center are two helping organizations that make a difference in many lives each year and that maintain solid community support. A person

in need of a wig and/or prosthetics following cancer treatment needn't even leave town to find them. Someone seeking assistance in a support group setting has many different groups addressing many different concerns—ranging from caregiving, addiction, cancer, and grief—to pick from. These are but a few examples of services and opportunities that help those in need. It is a hallmark of a strong community to have systems in place to help people in times of struggle. Any of us who have lived here for any amount of time have either used some of these resources ourselves or know someone who has directly benefitted from them.

The Hastings Star Gazette staff works hard to keep us informed of events and happenings in our community and the newspaper also provides a forum for people to share ideas and concerns.

There are many other communities within our community as well. Maybe you are part of a faith community and take part in weekly services or classes. Maybe your children are attending one of our schools and you are an active parent in that particular school's community. Maybe you and your neighbors are an even more local community, keeping your street safe and clean.

Like any individual, any community can point to areas where improvement is needed. Hastings is no different. I don't see glaring needs. I see little needs. A little more kindness, compassion, and tolerance for our fellow residents. A little more effort to do our part to keep our community clean and safe. A little more giving back when we can so the help is there when it is our turn to need it. Just like gratitude practice, a little help can go a long way. That is what community is all about.

As a resident of Hastings, I feel blessed by what our community offers. I try to do my part in supporting the community in little ways day in and day out. This column is my effort to support wellness in our community on a wider scale. Speaking of wellness, please join us at the

Hastings Community Health Fair on April 4 from 9:00 a.m. to noon in the High School Commons. I will be there sharing how gratitude can enhance overall wellness. I hope to see you there too!