

*Preserving Rural Work Ethic,
Promoting Rural Spirit,
Pioneering Progressive
Development*

HOOPESTON HORIZONS

HOOPESTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The Hoopeston Economic Development Committee would like to wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season!!



The Arts and Economic Development *What does Hoopeston Have to Offer?*

It was Hoopeston's superb quality of life that brought Kathleen Margevich and her family to Hoopeston 11 years ago. Kathleen stated "There are wonderful things here in Hoopeston including safety, great teachers, a great



Cast of Pippin, 2007

library, and a good hospital". Born and raised in Chicago, Kathleen came to Hoopeston to enjoy the quality environment for raising a family that Hoopeston provides. Kathleen said "you don't find the same type of community support in a big city that you find here in Hoopeston". She explained that when her daughter Emily has performances the teachers put it on their calendar and

attend the performances to support her interest in the arts.

The Academy of the Performing Arts began 11 years ago and the Artistic Repertory Theater was formed 5 years ago. The Academy of the Performing Arts is a service to the community. Money that is collected from the students goes into the operations of the Academy. The Academy currently has 60 students enrolled in piano and voice lessons, 95 students enrolled in dance, and 25 students enrolled in drama. The Academy of the Performing arts has provided an outlet for young people that are interested in pursuing an activity other than sports. The experience at the Academy has instilled an appreciation for the arts into the young people in Hoopeston and increased their self esteem.

Five years ago Kathleen recognized that many Hoopeston residents were driving back and forth to Cissna Park to participate in community theater. People who had never gone to the theater before began to go from Hoopeston to Cissna park to participate in

performances. Recognizing this growing interest and community need, Kathleen founded the Artistic Repertory Theater. The Artistic Repertory Theater is a non-profit organization serving northern Vermilion County and Southern Iroquois County. Board members hail from Ambia, IN and Champaign, IL, as well as the Hoopeston area. People who cannot afford class now have the opportunity to participate in community theater. The Artistic Repertory Theater has filled quite a void and has grown into a welcome loving family. Performances average approximately 150 attendees per show and each



Cast of Pippin, 2007

performance runs for three nights. Performances for 2008 include Cinderella and Music Man Junior. Auditions for Cinderella will be April 5th, 2008 from 3pm – 5pm. Music Man Jr. auditions (children and young adults)

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The Arts and Economic Development

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will be April 13th at 3pm.

Performances for Cinderella are planned for June 27, 28, and 29 and performances for Music Man Junior are planned for July 25, 26, and 27.

The Academy of the Performing Arts and the Artistic Repertory Theater has generated an appreciation for the arts among participants and community residents and has encouraged some young people to pursue the arts as a career path. The Academy provides theater exposure to the students before they reach college and guides students, making them better prepared when they begin college.

Currently three students possess the drive to perform professionally in larger cities and are looking into obtaining a college degree in the arts. There are also students that are interested in pursuing careers in other fields but because of their positive experiences through the Academy and the Artistic Repertory Theater they will continue to support theaters wherever they may end up. "The arts have been another avenue of education in Hoopeston. Kids today have access to the internet and can read about the arts, increase their education, and they may return to the community or provide money to the Arts in Hoopeston when they are adults

and/or famous", stated Margevich.

Everything that has happened with the growth of the arts in Hoopeston has been a natural progression. Kathleen's education and experience is in the performing arts and instruction. She is interested in gaining more experience in grant writing and business management in order to continue to grow and expand the Arts Academy in Hoopeston. When asked if there was a possibility for the arts to expand and grow in Hoopeston, Kathleen responded, "Strange wonderful things happen, you just never know. We could stay small or someone could take an interest and the arts could expand".

City of Hoopeston Obtains VISTA Volunteer

Jean Minick, longtime Hoopeston resident, began her position as the VISTA volunteer with the City of



Hoopeston working in the office of the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development on November 17th.

The City of Hoopeston has obtained a VISTA volunteer to aid in building the capacity of its residents to lead community and economic development initiatives. The AmeriCorps VISTA program presents yet another opportunity for the City to build its capacity to

lead economic development initiatives by having a community resident trained to serve their community in various areas of development. The mission of VISTA is to "increase the capacity of low-income people to improve the conditions of their own lives". The City of Hoopeston is looking to strengthen the economic base and improve the quality of life in the City by alleviating poverty through the creation and attraction of new businesses and the creation of new jobs. Jean will work on a variety of projects that work to better the lives of Hoopeston residents living in poverty.

Jean's primary project involves developing a work plan to provide affordable and accessible housing for all Hoopeston Residents. She has begun by surveying the community to determine availability and condition of

existing housing and has also analyzed demographic data as it relates to housing. She is now in the process of compiling this data and creating a Hoopeston housing profile. This comprehensive report will be used by the City of Hoopeston to develop a Hoopeston action plan which will be used to attract new affordable residential development in the City. This project has been possible through a Rural Community Development Initiative Grant from the USDA which was received by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs.

Specifics projects have been developed to meet each goal. If you would like additional information Jean can be contacted at 217-283-7873 or by email at hoopestondevelopment@yahoo.com. If you have feedback on any of the areas mentioned above you can contact Jean at anytime.

Mayor's Youth Council Receives Governor's Hometown Award

On Tuesday, November 27, 2007 the Hoopeston Mayor's



Youth Council was recognized at the Governor's Hometown Awards Banquet for the Youth Town Hall "Country Boys" Project which began in 2005. The Mayor's Youth Council received 1st place in the Youth Involvement Category for communities in the population bracket 5,901 – 10,000. The Mayor's Youth Council was also one of 8 Governor's Cup Finalists from all population categories chosen from the forty awarded projects. This recognition is a tremendous honor for Hoopeston.

In 2005, a documentary aired entitled "Country Boys." The story of two high school boys struggling for identity and opportunity in a small, poverty-stricken town in Kentucky directly paralleled the environment in Hoopeston. The documentary was viewed as a tool to teach at-risk youth, and a partnership was formed between WILL (who aired the documentary), the City of Hoopeston, and the Hoopeston School District. The goal of the Youth Town Hall Project was to identify youth struggles and give teens a chance

to voice their concerns. Adult leaders met regularly for one year to identify solutions. Hoopeston youth were directly involved in planning and leading the initiative, giving them a sense of



Emily Warner Displays Award Plaque

belonging to the community. Surveys conducted by 13 youth brought light to issues such as unemployment, drugs, and alcohol. A one-on-one mentoring program created as a result of the youths' excitement helps keep young people in school, improve their grades, and decrease the use of drugs and alcohol. The mayor's youth council and the Overtime youth center held at the Multi-Agency were also outcomes of the Youth Town Hall initiative.

The Town Hall initiative has had a long term impact on the community. The youth of Hoopeston now have a voice in the community and are working

to better their community!



The youth care about their community and are concerned about the future of the community. This has led them to become involved in the Hoopeston visioning committees, with each youth council member sitting on at least one of the four community visioning committees (Housing, infrastructure, downtown revitalization, and business retention and expansion). The youth have also formed four of their own committees as part of the Mayor's Youth Council. These committees include Overtime (youth center), community service, youth events, and skate park committee. The Service Committee has instituted "Random Acts of Kindness" and will perform at least one random act of kindness for the community each month.

This project was made possible due to the partnership of Prairie Center Health Systems and WILL AM-FM-TV at the University of Illinois. The Hoopeston youth have worked hard to get this project started and to make it sustainable!

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

As part of her AmeriCorps VISTA assignment, Jean Minick is partnering with the Mayor's Youth Council to plan a service activity for Hoopeston on Martin Luther King Day. This day of service to the community of Hoopeston will follow the mission of VISTA to "increase the capacity of low-income people to improve the conditions of their own lives".

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was devoted to improving the quality of life for American citizens living in poverty.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a vital figure of the modern



era. His lectures and dialogues stirred the concern and sparked the conscience of a generation. The movements and marches he led brought significant changes in the fabric of American life through his courage and selfless devotion. This devotion gave direction to thirteen years of civil rights activities. His charismatic leadership inspired men and women, young and old, in this nation and around the world.

Dr. King's concept of "somebodiness," which symbolized the celebration of human worth and the conquest of subjugation, gave black and poor people hope and a sense of dignity. His wisdom, his words, his actions, his commitment, and his dream for a new way of life

for impoverished American citizens serves as an example today for communities to follow to better the lives of impoverished community residents.

The late Coretta Scott King embraced the King Day of Service as a meaningful way to celebrate and honor her husband's legacy. She said, "The greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by performing individual acts of kindness through service to others." Jean Minick and the Hoopeston Mayor's Youth Council desire to honor Martin Luther King Jr. and serve the citizens of Hoopeston by facilitating a can food drive for the Grant Township Food Cupboard.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service will be kicked off with a presentation about Martin Luther King Jr., given by Jean Minick as part of the January historical society meeting on Monday, January 21st at 6:30 pm at the Hoopeston Public Library. This meeting is open to the public and everyone is invited and encouraged to attend. Please bring canned goods to this Historical Society meeting for the Grant Township Food Cupboard. The can drive will then continue throughout the week of January 21st with various drop off locations throughout the community. More information with specific drop off locations will be provided as this event gets closer!

This Martin Luther King Day of Service in Hoopeston is an opportunity for Hoopeston residents of all backgrounds to come together to better the community through an act of kindness. Lou Graham, director of the Hoopeston Public Library had the opportunity to hear Martin Luther King Jr. speak and described him by saying, "he encouraged Americans of all racial, economic, and social backgrounds to be the best they can be no matter what occupation they were in for the betterment of those around them".

We hope that you will join Jean Minick and the Hoopeston Mayor's Youth Council to collect food for the Grant Township Food cupboard. By doing so, you will help strengthen the City of Hoopeston; bridge social and cultural differences, and demonstrate the compassion and commitment to make a difference and honor Dr. King's memory. Please join the City of Hoopeston, along with tens of millions of other community volunteers throughout the United States that serve their communities in King's honor. We hope that this Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service will act as a reminder to perform random acts of kindness in the community and "be the best you can be" throughout the year! If you would like to be involved in this project or have ideas please contact Jean Minick at 217-283-7873 or by email at hoopestondevelopment@yahoo.com.

Hoopeston Recognized as Associate Illinois Main Street Community

During the two day Illinois Main Street Conference in Danville, IL November 14th and 15th Hoopeston was announced as an



Mayor DeWitt and Hoopeston leaders join Lt Gov. Pat Quinn to receive recognition of Hoopeston's participation in the program.

Illinois Main Street Community. Twenty six Illinois communities were visited during the application process but only three were selected as Associate Main Street Communities. These communities include Woodstock IL in the north, Canton Illinois in the west, and Hoopeston.

Hoopeston is now part of a National program with 2000 Main Street communities in 43 states. The Illinois Main Street Program is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation which allows Hoopeston to receive architectural services once it obtains a designated status. The Illinois Main Street Program started in Illinois in 1993 and is now in over 60 Illinois communities, seen 581 million dollars reinvested, more than 1,600 new businesses, over 3,500 new full time jobs, and 2,675 new part time jobs.

The Main Street program is organized in each community like a business. There is a management team consisting of a

board comprised of community volunteers, four volunteer committees, and an executive director. The Illinois Main Street program uses a comprehensive four point approach. These four focus areas include promotions, design, economic restructuring, and organization. The promotions committee handles special events, image development, retail events, and coordinates cooperative advertising. The design committee is responsible for the appearance of the downtown district, working to preserve the look and character of historic buildings. They are also responsible for the overall



Community leaders along with Les Cavada from Illinois Main Street at the 2007 Awards banquet in Danville, IL.

streetscape including flowers, benches, lights, trash receptacles, etc. The economic restructuring committee handles target marketing by surveying existing businesses and working to attract new businesses. The organization committee is responsible for volunteer recruitment, public relations, and fundraising.

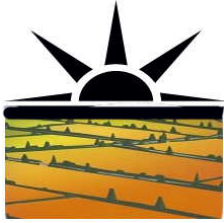
To become a Designated Illinois Main Street community Hoopeston has several tasks that will need to be completed prior to February 15, 2009. Not every

community can be a Main Street community; it requires broad based public support, a vision and mission, a comprehensive work plan, historic preservation ethic, an active board and committees, adequate operating budget, paid director, ongoing training for staff and volunteers, reporting on key downtown statistics, and membership in the National Main Street Network.

Hoopeston is now listed as a Main Street community on the Illinois Main Street Web Site. You can visit the site at: http://www.standingupforillinois.org/mainstreet/ms_towns.php. We will also link this site to the City Web Site. This will be a great tool in marketing the community and specifically the downtown, as many tourists visit the Main Street Web Site.

So what does all this mean for Hoopeston? This means that Hoopeston will have an established structure to undertake a comprehensive revitalization effort in the downtown district. It means more dollars circulating locally and a better tax base if new businesses are brought to the downtown. It means an improved quality of life for the community. It means an enhanced visual appearance in the downtown. It provides one more opportunity for the community to work together for the betterment of Hoopeston!

Please promote this opportunity and contact Shannon Ruh at 283-7873 if you would like to be involved in any capacity with the program in Hoopeston.



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Hoopeston Welcomes Action Travel

Born and raised in Hoopeston, Kristi Edwards left Hoopeston following High School to work in the travel industry. She began her career working for American Express travel in Chicago. She then went to work for Student Travel (STA) in Champaign, IL, Vancouver, BC, Las Vegas, NV, and San Diego, CA. Following several years with STA she did entertainment travel with Sea Gate in Los Angeles, CA and government travel in Fayetteville, NC. Recognizing that Hoopeston is a great place to raise her 1 1/2 year old daughter, she returned to Hoopeston one year ago.

After living in large cities throughout the U.S. and Canada she chose to return to Hoopeston where everyone knows her and her family, people are friendly and greet her as she passes, she has a yard, and a large expanse of land to raise horses. All of these positive quality of life factors create an environment she desires for her daughter. While she has seen a

change in Hoopeston during the 10 years she was away, she is hopeful that the Hoopeston economy will improve



Kristi Edwards, owner and travel agent with Action Travel.

With vast experience and networks in the travel industry Kristi has decided to start her own travel business, Action Travel. She will serve Hoopeston residents from her office at 206 South Market Street and via the internet she will serve clients throughout the United States. She plans to start out small and then grow the business by hiring additional travel agents.

Working with a travel agent can provide benefits that travelers may not receive when using Travelocity, Orbitz, or another online travel source. A travel agent offers a familiar face and personalized service. When individuals book travel packages through Travelocity or another online dealer the purchaser receives exactly what they request. Once the ticket is purchased changes cannot be made. A travel agent can make changes or cancellations after the travel package is purchased. A travel agent can also search multiple travel options and often obtain better travel deals. Hotels will often work with travel agents to provide upgraded rooms, competitive rates, and additional amenities for the same price.

Action Travel is located at 206 South Market Street and is open from 8am to 3pm Monday through Friday or by appointment. Please stop by Action Travel and let Kristi plan your next vacation!