

VILLAGE PEOPLE 2007 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It's pretty easy to measure the success that the *Village People* had in 2007 – just look around.

A little more than a year ago the former Franciscan-Skemp Clinic in this building closed. But thanks to a generous lease offer and to the Herculean efforts of a group of volunteers, the clinic building was transformed into a Boys & Girls Club which opened this summer. Instead of a silent building and a parking lot growing weeds, we have a busy, vibrant club that already is serving more members than even the most optimistic projections foresaw.

The Boys & Girls Club started as a *Village People* project but now has been officially turned over to the new Boys & Girls Club of West Salem, which has its own Board of Directors. I'm exceptionally proud of this project and am adamant that credit must go to the devoted Youth Committee volunteers who made this project successful because of their countless hours of hard work.

Part of the mission of the *Village People* is "capturing the spirit and uniqueness of the past, present, and future of our community." The Boys & Girls Club represents both the present in the programming and opportunities it offers for youth and the future. Today's youth represent tomorrow's community leaders.

So, where do we go from here? The Oversight Committee has spent some time contemplating this question because answering that is essential to charting our future course. One thing we know for sure is that our focus must return to downtown revitalization and working on those efforts. Thanks to the leadership from Sharon Fuller, we will prepare for the next round of financing for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Enhancement Program. In 2006 the *Village People* worked with the Village of West Salem to prepare a downtown streetscape project grant, which was submitted to the state.

Although we did not get funding, our ranking was third out of eight projects presented in our area, and the proposal received excellent reviews. Most projects are submitted several times before

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receiving money since there are many more proposals submitted than state money available. We intend to make our project a winner this time.

Our other direction depends, quite frankly, on the rest of you. The Oversight Committee intends to examine our committee structure which needs a fresh infusion of energy, talent, and time. Our success as an organization rests on our ability to get the commitment from our members to work on specific projects. Critical to that success will be involvement. That was demonstrated in getting the Boys & Girls Club launched. We need that involvement as we tackle challenges ahead.

That's why when you came in the door tonight, you were asked two questions. The first was to tell us one thing you love about West Salem. The second was to give one idea for improving West Salem. We plan to take your feedback to leverage our strengths, work on our weaknesses, and continue to work very hard to make West Salem an even better community for all of us.

Thank you for a successful 2007. I look forward to 2008.

Sincerely,

Chris Hardie
Village People President



If you think you are too small to do big things,
try doing small things in a big way.

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CONGRATULATIONS!

The Village People presented these awards at its annual meeting, November 6, 2007:

Celebrating West Salem award -- In 2006, the *Village People* Oversight Committee and the Board from the West Salem Business Association sat down to discuss how we would work together to better promote West Salem. One idea floated during that meeting was the idea to start a community event that would highlight the great businesses and organizations in West Salem. The West Salem Business Association took that idea and ran with it. In March, 2007, the first "Celebrate West Salem" event was held at West Salem High School, and more than 60 businesses and organizations participated. It was a very successful event. To celebrate this accomplishment, the *Village People* recognized Eric Bauer, president of the West Salem Business Association, and Dan Eoriatti, past president, for their work in launching "Celebrate West Salem"!

Lisa Sauer -- Lisa Sauer was recognized for her work as a member of the La Crosse Boys and Girls Club staff for getting the West Salem club up and running. Lisa's willingness to help the West Salem group and the many hours she spent in that effort were

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instrumental in allowing the West Salem group to receive its charter.

Franciscan-Skemp and Mayo – The outlook was not so sunny three years ago when Franciscan-Skemp officials announced that the West Salem Clinic would close upon completion of a new clinic in Onalaska located on Theatre Road. In the fall of 2004, a meeting with Franciscan-Skemp officials was organized by the *Village People*. At that meeting local community leaders expressed concerns about access, transportation, and the impact the Clinic's closing would have on downtown West Salem. While attempts to convince the healthcare officials to keep open the West Salem Clinic failed, seeds of ideas were planted at that meeting. A suggestion from the *Village People* was sown about what the future uses for the building would be, including the possibility of a Boys & Girls Club. Two years later, after much negotiation and discussion, the announcement was made that Franciscan-Skemp and Mayo officials had agreed to lease the building for \$1 a year for two years to the *Village People's* Youth Committee, which paved the way for the Boys & Girls Club.

In August, 2006, as Franciscan-Skemp was preparing to close its clinic in West Salem and move to a brand-new clinic in Onalaska, Dr. Robert Nesse, CEO and president of Franciscan-Skemp, said the health care system likes to invest in communities. "Quite frankly, we couldn't find a better use for this facility," Nesse said. We couldn't agree more.

The *Village People* would like to thank Dr. Robert Nesse, Franciscan-Skemp chief executive officer and president, and Ron Paczkowski, Franciscan-Skemp executive vice-president, for their generous contribution to making the dreams of our youth come true.

Don and Cheryl Brenengen -- Here are two special people who deserve additional thanks because of their tireless work for this organization, the community of West Salem, and the La Crosse area.

More than four years ago, the *Village People* identified youth as one of its focus points. Following surveys, studies, and

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community-wide discussion, the idea for a Boys & Girls Club emerged. Two leaders also emerged to make that idea a reality – Don and Cheryl Brenengen. Cheryl is one of the original founders of the organization and remains one of its driving forces today. Her steady hand has been involved in all of our projects and, in Don's words, "the hours of paperwork she has cranked out of her office (bookkeeping; record-keeping; writing request letters, grants, e-mails, and thank-you letters; making phone calls; coordinating skilled labor; finding furnishings; ordering specialty items; and much more) cannot be counted or fully appreciated."

Then there's Don who not only chaired the Youth Committee but also took part, along with Cheryl, in every step along the way from the initial planning to organizing the advisory board to fund-raising. (Don might protest at this announcement, but since I have the floor, he'll just have to bear it.) It is estimated that Don had a hand in raising at least 80 percent of the \$500,000+ brought in for this project.

Many times the Brenengens were the only ones in the building, often working late into the night. Don even took a week off from his business the week before the scheduled opening to make sure the Club would be ready; he started early in the morning and continued late into the night painting rooms and trim as well as last-minute finishing work. The number of hours Don

and Cheryl have worked on this project is off the charts. Their commitment was so strong they even put off their house-building plans until the Club was completed.



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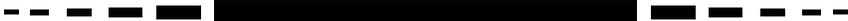
VILLAGE PEOPLE WINTER “FUN” RAISER

January 2008 might have been one of the coldest winter months we’ve had in recent years, but our January 19th “FUN” Raising event was truly a heart-warming evening! Because of the generosity of West Salem, Bangor, and communities beyond, this event raised over \$10,000.00 to be donated to the endowment fund for the recently established Boys & Girls Club of the West Salem Area.

The support that businesses and individuals showed, even if they were unable to attend, was outstanding. We cannot thank everyone enough for their generosity, especially in times like these. We’d like to extend a special thank you to Judith Corbett Hutchens for her donation of numerous auction items. Now, with approximately 400 members, the Club will benefit from the endowment fund as it grows and helps sustain it.

Damian and Jeanne Miller, avid supporters of the Club, were once again on hand to talk with those who braved the cold and ventured to Maple Grove Country Club. Not surprisingly, a dinner at Traditions Restaurant with Damian and Jeanne was the top live auction item. (We thank Sue Weidemann and Traditions for this donation!) A beautiful case holding a Brewers Jersey signed by Damian and displaying several of his baseball cards was also a well-received auction item.

The *Village People* thank Youth Committee members Vicki Miller and Sue Weidemann for doing the lion’s share of the work in putting this “fun” raiser together. Other committee members included Lisa Sauer and Cheryl Brenengen. The event included silent auction items, “wing span” raffle items, and a Chinese Raffle for several items (including a 15” table top/wall hanging TV with a DVD Player.) A new and fun addition to the evening was the “Bauble Head” Races. Picture Damian Miller, Brett Farve, Donald Driver, and a host of sports favorites all racing down a track with a throw of the dice! What will we think of next? Stay tuned until next year!



“Sit not idle, for your luck sits with you.” –Old Rumanian Proverb

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COULEE CHORDSMEN AND WINONA HIMS BENEFIT CONCERT

How uplifting can a concert on a dreary, cold Sunday afternoon be? VERY UPLIFTING when you have over 80 beautiful male voices lifting up gospel music in a wonderful place such as the Heider Center!

On March 2, the crowd was entertained for a continuous hour and-a-half with both the Chordsmen and the Winona Hims performing individually and then as a combined chorus. With crowd pleasers like “Let Me Call You Sweetheart” and “My Wild Irish Rose”, these handsome fellas all decked out in tuxedos were sure to bring back well-cherished memories for those in attendance.

Following the concert, a light lunch was served by the *Village People* in the West Salem High School Commons. To the delight of everyone enjoying this social time (and the servers who missed the concert), the gentlemen broke out in small groups and entertained once again! Smiles were everywhere as song requests became beautiful music. While serving the lunch, this server heard nothing but rave reviews!

The proceeds from this benefit concert, about \$3500, will go to the endowment fund of the Boys & Girls Club of the West Salem Area. The *Village People* and the Boys & Girls Club can’t thank these gentlemen enough for their idea of putting on the concert for the benefit of our local children. We appreciate their time, extreme talent, and dedication to the West Salem community!



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COMMUNITY MEETING

Dear Community Member:

As one of the organizations in West Salem that is concerned about our future, the *Village People* would like to invite your group to a community meeting on April 10, at 6:30 p.m. in the Heider Meeting Room at West Salem High School.

The purpose of this meeting is to bring organizations and people from the West Salem area together to discuss our hopes and concerns and possibly to identify common goals and ideas. Members of the Village Board and School Board have been invited.

The West Salem area is a wonderful community which provides excellent opportunities for children, families, and folks of all ages. As someone who belongs to an organization which helps to provide those benefits to our community, we know you understand that.

While we have much to be proud of about our community, we also have some challenges. Raising money, finding people willing to volunteer, and just finding the time to serve in our ever-busy world are challenges all organizations face. Then there is the challenge of keeping focus on specific projects or events that are worthy of your organization’s time.

The meeting will be facilitated by Karl Green, community resource agent with the La Crosse County UW-Extension office. Karl will help lead and steer a conversation that, we hope, will bring the West Salem community closer together, forge possible alliances between groups, and define West Salem’s path to the future.

Please give this invitation careful thought and consideration. We feel it is vital to our community's health and future. Our agenda is nothing but providing a closer connection between you and the others in West Salem who share your passion for making this a better community for all.

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Feel free to contact me at (608) 786-6830 if you have questions or comments. We plan to publicize this event in the *Coulee News*. We hope that you will join us April 10. If you cannot attend, we still do welcome your comments or input and will be more than happy to share the outcome of the meeting.

Sincerely,
Chris Hardie
Village People president



PATHWAYS FOR OUR DOWNTOWN

The Village of West Salem, with support from the *Village People* and member Sharon Fuller (who is chairperson of the Village's Economic Development Advisory Committee) is in the process of applying for Wisconsin Department of Transportation Enhancement funding. This is a WisDOT program administered by the State but funded by the federal government. If awarded, the funding will be used for streetscape amenities in the downtown business district as well as new pedestrian and bicycle routes in the downtown.

The project, called *PATHWAYS*, includes landscaping and beautification, period lighting, benches, bike racks, bike routes, traffic-calming elements, green space, and other improvements. The project will make downtown a more inviting and a safer place for pedestrians and motorists. *PATHWAYS* will provide economic stimulus to the downtown and impetus for reinvestment and growth. The area will become multifunctional and more distinctive from other Village settings; in addition, it will create human activity and a sense of place or focus in our Village.

The project will cost \$670,000. The local share will be \$134,000 with a federal share of \$536,000. Over the past few years, the Village has set some funding aside for the project. The final application is due April 18, 2008, and the Village should hear on its rating in September, 2008. In 2006, the *PATHWAYS* project ranked third out of eight in our MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization).

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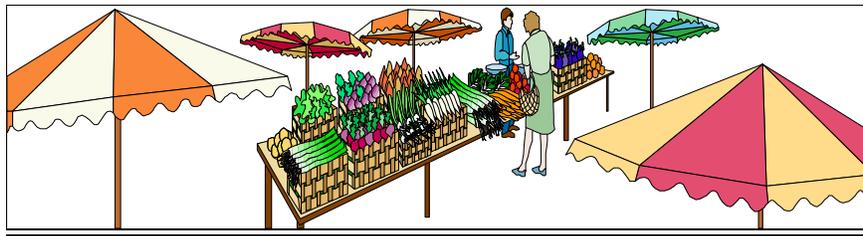
SEE US AT
“CELEBRATE WEST SALEM”!

The *Village People* will have a booth at the “Celebrate West Salem” business expo on Sunday, April 6, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at West Salem High School. Please stop in and say hello. Then visit other local businesses and civic groups in an event that showcases some of the great assets of our community!



GET READY FOR THE FARMERS MARKET!

We are pleased to announce the ever-popular Farmers Market will be opening on Wednesday, June 4. As in the past, the hours are 3:30 – 6:00 p.m.
Vegetables, fruits, flowers – Picked fresh for you!!



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HELPING OUT



As a nonprofit group, we need to work hard to raise funds. We have several opportunities for you to pitch in and give us a hand this summer.

Hansen's food sales

This year our major fund-raisers will be four food-sales events: grilling brats and pork chops at Hansen's IGA on April 19, June 28, Aug. 23, and Sept. 20.

Clip this and post it on your refrigerator!

We need four or five people for three to four hours at each event. It's a good time and a chance to get to know some of your fellow volunteers.

If you can't volunteer that day, you can still help out. Spread the word about these sales. Buy lunch for your family, friends, and neighbors! The more food we sell, the more successful the event is.

Proceeds from the April 19 and Aug. 23 event will go toward the *Village People* general fund. Proceeds from the June 28 and Sept. 20 events will go toward the Boys & Girls Club.

The *Village People* always appreciate your tax-deductible contribution to our work.

Your financial support plays a vital role in "Working Today for West Salem's Tomorrow".

Please send your contribution to :

The Village People
P.O. Box 10
West Salem, WI 54669

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The mission of the Village People is to engage the community in identifying and facilitating projects for growth and development, beautification, historic preservation, and community awareness of the benefits of proactive planning. Our primary focus is on the revitalization of downtown, capturing the spirit and uniqueness of the past, present, and future of our community.

"People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them."

--George Bernard Shaw