

VILLAGE PEOPLE 2008 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The year 2008 marked a return to the roots of the *Village People* and its focus on downtown revitalization.

The news that West Salem has received a \$670,000 streetscape project which was initiated with the *Village People* is a major achievement for our group. Since the year 2000, the *Village People* has worked on the concept of a downtown streetscape project, working in conjunction with the village of West Salem.

The project will emphasize the bike shelter spearheaded by the *Village People* and the community in 2005 and will bring bikers, walkers, and new streetlights to the downtown. The *Village People* will continue to be involved with the project and assist the village in carrying it through to its completion.

I cannot thank and say enough about the people who have devoted countless hours of energy and work to this project, especially Sharon Fuller, one of our founding members who agreed to take the lead for the village and its Economic Development Advisory Committee. Others of you were involved in the design and development of the plan as well. And you didn't give up when the plan wasn't funded in 2006; you just rolled up your sleeves and went back to work.

There's no question that a vital, thriving downtown serves as the core of a healthy community. The importance of that was driven home for the *Village People* this past spring after we hosted a community meeting.

Earlier this year the *Village People* held a community meeting and invited community members and organizations. With the help of Karl Green from UW-Extension, we discussed the community accomplishments, needs, and priorities. Downtown vibrancy came out tied with an aquatic center at the top of the list.

That affirms our desire to refocus on the downtown and assisting with the execution of the Pathways project, which will be our main goal in 2009.

I would be neglectful if I did not mention the outstanding success of the Boys and Girls Club of West Salem, which was started as a *Village People* project and now is operating on its own, with membership levels far exceeding even the most optimistic projections. There are 620 youth using the club. That's the result of selfless volunteering and the results of many, many people who put their time and talents into making that project happen.

That's the kind of leadership and commitment the *Village People* needs as we move forward. Our group 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.

Thank you for all you do to make West Salem a better community.

Sincerely,

Chris Hardie



PATHWAYS

Picture this: Decorative lighting, planters, green space, colored pavers, handicap accessibility ramps, designated bicycle lanes and routes, and new community connectivity and travel to and through the Village of West Salem.

You just had a quick snapshot of *PATHWAYS*, the Local Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program recently awarded to West Salem by Governor Doyle and state transportation officials. *PATHWAYS* is a \$670,000 streetscape project the *Village People* inspired and supported since 2000, and now all the years of hard work and support have culminated in actually being able to fulfill what was once just a concept.

Using the text from the project application, here are more details on the project: *PATHWAYS* will provide “safety for multimodal users in the downtown area, improved and safer routes throughout the Village limits.” A focal point in the project is the bike shelter at Mill and Jefferson streets, next to the La Crosse River State Trail (LRST). In 2007, there were 48,325 users of the La Crosse River State Trail (LRST). The \$100,000 bike shelter was spearheaded by the *Village People* and community donated in 2005. Creating an inviting atmosphere with appealing streetscape will help bring these users into the downtown.

PATHWAYS will feature “aesthetically pleasing, water- permeable, colored pavers, trees and mulch, bike racks, user waste and recyclable receptacles, benches, decorative energy efficient

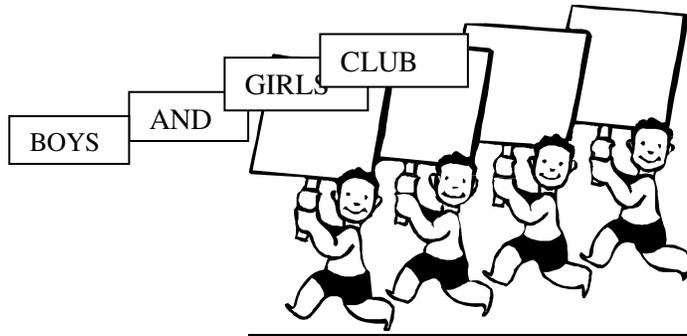
lighting with safety, security, and light pollution considerations.” It will “exude a warm and inviting avenue into our Village” and “provide an economic stimulus in downtown with opportunities for reinvestment and growth and historic preservation.” The project will take into consideration bicycle and pedestrian users, tourists, disabled and elderly, children, shoppers and business owners. “These improvements are intended to make a safe, inviting, and calming atmosphere for non-motorists and motorized users.”

“The concepts of *PATHWAYS* with its bicycle routes and lanes, landscaping and streetscape, provide logical, high connectivity to and around the downtown, as well as a means of bicycle and pedestrian travel from the outer limits of the Village to reach destinations such as schools, the LRST, Village parks, historic sites, business districts, and Lakeview Business Park.” *PATHWAYS* will foster improved exposure and use of downtown for residents and nonresidents, and the “downtown will become more distinctive from other settings, multifunctional, create human activity, and enhance community ownership while providing a ‘sense of place’ or focus in our Village.” The Village has a five-year facility improvement infrastructure plan that incorporated *PATHWAYS* and current Village, County, and State bicycle routes, and street improvements plans will also be used.

There is so much more to this project, and we know the *Village People* will continue to support and be active in seeing *PATHWAYS* to completion. “*PATHWAYS* is our path and our way to a better, vital downtown and Village.” Funding for design is scheduled for July 2009, but there will be a lot to do between now and then. The *Village People* will keep you updated on how you can continue being part of

this great community project. We thank the *Village People* and the Village's Economic Development Advisory Committee for their dedication to the *PATHWAYS* project.

Congratulations!!



PAST YOUTH COMMITTEE INITIATIVE IS ON A ROLL

Yes, the hard work was all worth it. The Boys & Girls Club of the West Salem Area is a huge success with current membership at 620 youth! Average daily attendance for September and October was 88. Total (Different) members served in the month of October were 328! This far exceeds the *Village People* original hopes and projected expectations.

Examples of fun stuff the kids are doing have included: Spa Night, Halloween Parties, Haunted House, and, of course, the regular programs and assistance the Club does on a routine basis. November's weekly themes are: All about Cards, Hair 101, When I Grow Up I Want to Be..., Thanksgiving.

Deana Protz has done an outstanding job with this Club and is a huge asset to our youth and our community. If you haven't met her, please stop by the club and say hello. You will be impressed with her enthusiasm and her ease in working with children and motivating her staff.

Tutors are still wanted for working with students who need a little extra help – Volunteer! More part-time staff will also be hired soon so if you or someone you know would be perfect for this type of work, check it out.

The club is slightly over the original projected budget; due to the overwhelming utilization, expenses have increased. We must also realistically acknowledge that there may be a point at which the current facility will no longer be large enough to accommodate the numbers of children using it. Days with over 100 students in the building are becoming more and more frequent. (The record at this writing is 140 kids!)

2009 will be the third and final year of the fundraising campaign that the *Village People* Youth Committee initiated to get the Club up and running and financed through the first three years of operation. We can't thank donors enough for their support and for the faith and trust they placed in this organization to get the job done as promised.

In 2009 the challenge will be for the Boys & Girls Club of West Salem and its Advisory Board to continue to solicit for future financial commitments from businesses and individuals in the community and beyond. This is necessary, even in difficult financial times, in order to keep the Club open, evaluate facility options, and continue to serve our area communities in a way that make us all very proud. We hope that you will see the long-term benefit in supporting this Club and choose to support it in any long-term way you can.



COMMUNITY MEETING HELD

The *Village People* held a community meeting April 10, 2008. Members of the community and leaders from the various groups and associations were invited to attend. The meeting was facilitated by Karl Green, from UW-Extension. The meeting's purpose was to discuss accomplishments, goals, and needs for West Salem and to try to identify some common threads.

Here are the notes, taken by *Village People* President Chris Hardie, from that meeting:

Village People Community Meeting
April 10, 2008

What accomplishments has the community completed during the past 10 years?

- Bike shelter
- Heider Center
- Boys and Girls Club
- *Village People*
- Lake Neshonoc improvement project, etc.
- Lake Neshonoc campground improvements
- Moving octagon house
- Hazel Brown Leicht Library
- High school addition and the school campus concept
- Soccer fields, soccer lights
- Improvements to hockey rink
- New elementary school
- New baseball fields
- Business park
- June Dairy Days
- Celebrate West Salem business expo
- New churches or additions to churches
- Coulee Christian School
- Farmer's market
- Bike trail to Veteran's Park
- Fairgrounds improvements and attractions
- Community clean-up days
- Business and residential development
- Good leadership in organizations
- Traffic lights on Hwy. 16
- Increase in First Responders
- Newspaper office downtown
- Fire department building renovation

- Downtown building façade improvements
- Sidewalks
- Location of triathlon
- Relay for Life

What will the needs of the West Salem community be in the future (now through 2023)?

- New public swimming pool
- Jobs/economic development
- Need for additional schools/school building updates
- New post office/more accessible
- Pedestrian overpass on Hwy. 16, coordinated with bike path improvements
- Green buildings, sustained development
- Better flow of traffic around schools
- More encouragement of bicycling and walking
- Elderly needs (housing, etc.)
- Encouraging healthy activities
- Downtown streetscape
- Full time ambulance, fire department
- Community center
- Bike and pedestrian bridge across the river
- Agricultural museum
- Protecting/ensuring water supply
- Keep downtown robust
- More parking/transportation routes
- Emergency response to disasters
- Encourage better communication in general
- Complete Hwy. 16 project from Onalaska to West Salem
- Village street improvements
- Encourage people to get involved/community service with the next generation
- Preserve Lake Neshonoc shoreline
- Shelter area at soccer fields
- Keep or maintain community identity
- Study of growth/impacts
- Tourism planning
- Better utilization of Vet's Park
- Permanent and larger home for the Boys and Girls Club
- Development of County Farm

What accomplishments would you like to see in the community in the next 10 years?

- Improve communication (better outreach by all entities)
- New aquatic center (indoor with other capabilities)
- Community center (a place to bring some of the groups, programs together)
- Continued growth plan/study (compare West Salem to similar communities)
- School growth study
- Continued improvements in inter-governmental communication and cooperation, equipment, municipal identity
- Vibrant downtown business and Hwy. 16 (streetscape, facades)
- Grant writer for community
- Maintain awareness of community culture and community identity

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Better communication: Local government/residents/community organizations. Better coverage from Coulee News, put County Farm plan in the paper. An improved Web site, all linked together.

Increased connectivity of the news and where to go for more information. How can the community get the information to the newspaper? Newsletter and better use of direct mail. We all need to ask people to be involved (especially the young people). Go to where the people are (June Dairy Days, sporting events, Boys and Girls Club.)

Strong community identity: Historical Society; all community groups; Ag Society, 4-H, organizations and churches; Fine Arts Board. A quarterly Village newsletter or a community newsletter.

FARMER'S MARKET

Once again the Farmer's Market season has come to an end. The fresh produce was available every Wednesday throughout the summer until October 15th. It was held from 3:00 to 6:30 p.m. near the bike shelter at the corner of Jefferson and Mill Streets.

We wish to thank everyone who supported the market by putting out yard signs or purchasing the great produce.

We look forward to another Farmer's Market next year.

BRAT AND PORK CHOP SALES

This summer the *Village People* held four successful brat and pork chop sales with the majority of the proceeds going to the West Salem Boys and Girls Club.

We wish to thank all who helped at these events and, especially, Hansen's IGA for their gracious support.

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.

“Nearly all the misfortunes of life come from our false ideas concerning what happens to us. To know men thoroughly, to judge events sanely, is then a great step towards happiness.”

--Stendhal

(French novelist and critic)

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