

Ozark Mountain Country Legacy Initiative begins

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Overlooking the hills from the ninth floor of the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson Jan. 23, the Ozark Mountain Legacy Team held a luncheon for more than 100 citizens to bring local communities together and stir “passion into action,” stated Jory Rolf of the organization.

According to Tess Rolf, the group is striving to create core values for the entire area and implement those values in the decision making process for each municipality. “Build an authentic community and work together as an entire Ozark team,” stated Ms. Rolf.

The purpose of the luncheon was to introduce the Ozark Mountain Legacy Initiative that is designed to identify and solidify the core values for the Ozark Mountain communities and grow toward a preferred future. In addition to the introduction of the initiative, the audience was placed into groups to identify, discuss and answer questions about the area.

The data from the discussions/questions were collected and will be compiled for further examination by the organization to unite and grow the area under a common mission, vision and set of core values.



Information provided stated that in 2004 a small group met with the intent of providing a collaborative process to do good things within the community as humble servants to the community and they formed the “Catalyst Group” to move forward.

Jory Rolf asked the audience, “What do you want to create that you cannot do alone?” Speaking enthusiastically, Rolf pushed to pull together area citizens and towns towards being catalysts and solidify core values for the common good.

Speaking next, Branson Mayor Raeanne Presley emphasized the “wealth in human capital” and “building quality relationships.”

Following Presley, Hollister City Administrator Rick Ziegenfuss spoke of the power of the group, building trust, the need to be a good neighbor and fostering confidence. Ziegenfuss noted the duplicating of initiatives between the cities and how all should capitalize on the knowledge of each other. He also stated the need for engagement and to expand the conversation.

The sharing of the same values that never change was expressed by Mayor Larry Cline of Rockaway Beach. He noted that by holding to that core, they never fail and only adjust the strategy to reach goals. He stated the need for making harmony a personal value to work with neighbors.

During the small group portion of the meeting, participants were asked to answer a variety of questions to define Ozark Mountain Country, its vision, mission and values. In addition, the groups were asked legacy survey questions varying from assets citizens should preserve in the Ozarks to challenges faced.

Keith Thurman of Shepherd of the Hills in his group stated hospitality and graciousness are among the virtues of the area. "If we lose that," said Thurman, "we will be just another place to go."

The organization intends to hold "Legacy Town Hall" meetings and visioning workshops this year in addition to holding "Ozark Mountain Spirit" festivals in each area city in September.

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