

Maintaining a Small-Town Feeling

By: Charlotte Rugg

As I have grown, so has Stansbury Park. In my thirteen years of residency, I have seen the arrival of restaurants, dentists' offices, tanning salons, and schools. This little town has changed immensely, but such change is not always for the better. Unfortunately, for some communities, as the number of residents increases, less of those residents recognize the small-town feeling of the area.

What is this small town feeling and how can we retain it? Rather than relying solely on the number of residents in a community (for sections of Chicago can feel like a small town), the feeling relies on how the residents act toward each other and how they act toward their community. The small-town feeling has three components: It is a sense of belonging to the community, it is a pride for one's hometown, and it is a closeness to one's neighbors.

A sense of belonging is at the heart of anyone who considers themselves a member of a small town. In order to obtain this sentiment, one must have something to belong to first. Stansbury Park can be a genuine haven, rather than simply boundaries of a housing development. A gathering place in Stansbury can help. An area where kids can be entertained and good food is available would gather neighbors together. At the same time, the area must not be too big to attract tourist attention. It must be individual to Stansbury Park. Similar to how Deseret Peak is to Grantsville, Stansbury residents can call this place their own. The more a person interacts within their community, the more he or she feels that she belongs. A gathering place is a perfect place to associate with others.

In order for people to feel pride in a small town, the area must have a pleasant appearance. Parks should remain clean. Green belts need to be well maintained and litter-free. Strict graffiti laws can keep the old buildings and fences free of vandalism. Trees add charm and beauty to city streets that will make any resident proud. The leaders of Stansbury Park have done a remarkable job of maintaining our parks. I hope to see these habits continue, even as Stansbury Park grows.

Events such as the annual Stansbury Days and the Easter egg hunt are effective in gathering the community together. These activities should continue, but they cannot force a bond between neighbors. In this way, the third prerequisite to a small-town feeling is unlike the other two. To be close to one's neighbors, the individual must make it a personal goal. Simple things can create lasting friendships in the neighborhood and thus establish the small-town feeling. Such acts include:

- Giving house-warming gifts to new neighbors.
- Volunteering to watch the pets or water the plants of fellow residents. Shovel their walk before they can do it themselves. Acts of service are a great way to jumpstart friendships.
- Maybe there is a long-time neighbor, and you've never officially met. Introduce yourself. It is never too late to start a relationship.

In the forty years that Stansbury Park has existed, the town has been home to many homeowners proud to be a member of this small town. I am hoping to see this feeling of pride for the community, friendliness towards others, and the overall sense of welcoming continue in Stansbury Park. No matter how big our residence grows, let's keep this small-town feeling for many years to come.