

# This Campaign's Success Is Crucial To All Of Us

By Dan Deming

Hutchinson and Reno County taxpayers have a big stake in the outcome of the latest economic development and growth effort, called Building On Success. It is being spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce and everyone who cares about our community should be rooting for and, if possible, contributing toward the fundraising and achievement goals. It is much more than the typical rah-rah, everybody get on board, rose-colored-glasses hype often undertaken by the Chamber. Failure should not be an option.

Some localities would turn strictly to government funds to finance initiatives such as new business attraction, supporting existing companies, workforce enhancement and a more vibrant community. And while limited tax money is important to assist these efforts, the Hutchinson Chamber properly recognizes that business and industry should take the lead and be the primary driver of this \$1.5 million campaign. More than \$900,000 has already been raised. Building On Success will be paid for over the next five years, just as the larger Spirit of Success campaign did nearly eight years ago.

Many of us gripe about not having this or that in Hutchinson, along with taxes, the lackluster economy and a variety of things seemingly beyond our control but often frustrating. The Chamber is working on specific problems with measurable outcomes and a record of meeting goals from the 2003 launched effort. Private funds are being contributed by small and large businesses that see the importance of laying

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the groundwork for growth, which seldom happens overnight. That growth eventually expands our tax base along with producing a community that offers more opportunities for better jobs, seriously needed additional retail shopping, along with more overall activities and fun things to do.

Building On Success will also tackle deteriorating housing, expanding entertainment and recreational amenities, stagnant population, attracting and retaining more young people ages 25 to 40 and, of course, growing jobs. A shining example is Siemens Wind Power. We have many strengths, including a number taken for granted by a lot of long-timers and envied by other communities: excellent, growing health care; a community college geared toward assisting companies and individuals with training; tourism through the Cosmosphere and Underground Salt Museum; vastly improved four-lane highway access; renovated schools; shovel-ready industrial parks and other land immediately available to interested industry, complemented by an excellent relationship with state commerce officials.

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You may not have realized it, but between 2003 and 2010, the previous "Spirit" campaign helped create or retain 2,103 jobs, boosted payrolls by more than \$50 million, and resulted in capital investments topping \$210 million. Sure, it has been disappointing that our county population hasn't grown with these other achievements, but just where would we be had the community, through Chamber leadership, not banded together to form the first Success program? We hear a lot about unemployment and it is a terrible national problem, but locally, Reno County has 6 percent more job growth as of 2010 than when the decade began. We've gone from 31,038 workers to 32,990 as of last year.

As everyday citizens trying to make a living, support ourselves or our families, or as retirees, we owe a lot to the team of business and industry

leaders working to raise the dollars needed for Building On Success to move forward. We will all prosper if they are successful, meaning a larger tax base that should hold down property taxes if elected leaders put curbs on unnecessary spending and re-examine spending priorities.

The following people are making it happen: Joe Grieshaber, president of Dillon Stores; Dennis Queal, CFO, Data Center; Rob Green, president of Catalyst Equity Group; Keith Hughes, CEO, First National Bank; Mike Heck, CEO, Hutchinson Clinic; John Montgomery, publisher, Hutchinson News; Jim Gilliland, Gilliland & Hayes; Gabe Schlickau, Black Hills Energy; Sid Arpin, BG Consultants; Bob Fee, Fee Insurance; Lowell Peachey, Mennonite Manor; Angie Bergmeier, Shield Industries; Dave Kerr, Chamber president. If you know or see them, say thanks.

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