

Morning Sun acts proactively for community's future

Morning Sun, a rural Iowa community of 860, found out that their community didn't lack transportation resources; the problem was that people who needed transportation help didn't know what was available or how to access it.

Transportation, primarily the lack of it, was identified as an issue of concern during Morning Sun Horizons study circles and community visioning. Horizons is a program directed by Iowa State University Extension with funding from the Northwest Area Foundation. The program guides communities in the exploration and understanding of local poverty issues and establishment of goals that move the community towards prosperity for all.

"The Southeast Iowa Regional Bus (SEIBUS) is available to the people of Morning Sun, but our residents didn't know who could ride it or how to line up transportation," said Kathy Vance, Morning Sun resident and Louisa County Extension Education Director. "The Horizons committee lined up a training in January – we had the bus in town for the day and showed a video that explained SEIBUS services."



According to SEIBUS rider statistics, Morning Sun ridership increased following the training. That quarter reported 790 rides, up 130 rides from the previous quarter. Riders with disabilities increased from 11 rides the previous quarter to 59 rides during the quarter of the Horizons SEIBUS training.

Another Morning Sun Horizons task force is taking proactive steps to retain a town grocery store. When the local grocer came to them last winter saying he was afraid he'd have to close his store – keeping a local grocery became the top Horizons concern. Several subcommittees were formed to explore various aspects of the situation which included exploring options for the current grocer, the feasibility of forming a local food coop, and benefits of buying locally in partnership with the school and the care center.

"Awareness is rippling through the community, because of Horizons and the grocery store issue," Vance said. "More and more people understand how their actions today affect the future of this community – and they are deciding to be involved."

For more information, contact:

Kathy Vance, Louisa County Extension Education Director – 319 523-2371

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