Let’s Reimagine Our Future

This article appeared in The State Journal-Register on October 11, 2020.

By John Stremsterfer

In a time when a seemingly endless stream of challenging news has greeted us from day to day, it’s important to take pause and note what history has taught us. When overcoming struggles, it is less about how we have fallen, and more about how we arise (thank you, President Lincoln).

At the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln, we are honored to bear witness each day to the passion of others who recognize the importance of investing in the future. Our community and region are facing our fair share of challenges in the wake of the pandemic, including obstacles to becoming a more equitable society for all. These times have compounded matters we have been facing here at home for some time, including significant outward migration, and the growing realities of homelessness and social injustices.

The realities of where we are laid bare, this is no moment to be paralyzed by fear. Rather, this is the opportune moment to reflect on what has brought us to this moment, and then use that understanding to talk about - and act on - becoming the community we want to be… the Greater Springfield we want to create for future generations.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Foundation had been working with its community partners, donors and local leaders to advance an initiative to spark a fresh conversation about our region’s potential – and lay out steps to elevate the community’s livability, economy, creativity, and spirit. Our intent was then, and continues to be, to put the wheels in motion on bold, visionary and catalytic projects that we could collaboratively implement. The pandemic, and a national awakening to persistent inequities in our communities, has given this conversation ever greater meaning as we face a time of extraordinary unknowns.

The Community Foundation is excited to share that we have been laying the groundwork to help all of us pause, pivot, and reimagine how we move forward. In the midst of the challenges of the new normal, we see an opportunity to define our future collectively, and then act.
We invite you to stay tuned this Thursday for the announcement of an extraordinary, collaborative community engagement effort within the Greater Springfield Area to define how we take bold steps together for the region's future.

As we examine where we want to go, we are cognizant that ideas must come equipped with resources and the participation of many to move them forward, and we are committed to ensuring that we will be able to do more than just talk about the future - we will be ready to act.

We cannot know for sure what the next 10 minutes, 10 weeks, 10 months, or 10 years hold… and we cannot simply stand by, and wait to find out. To build a better region, we must take the next 10 steps together, now, for the future of Greater Springfield.

*John Stremsterfer is president and CEO of the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. For more information about the Community Foundation, visit [www.CFLL.org](http://www.CFLL.org), call 217/789-4431 or email info@CFLL.org.*