

Strategic Planning – January 9, 2015

In by Inch, Life's a Cinch

Grange Undertaking Strategic Planning Process

Professors Dan & Melanie Foster from Penn State University journeyed from State College to Millerstown on a cold January night to lead Perry Valley Grange in the first step of a strategic planning process. The goal of this process is to brainstorm ways to re-imagine our Grange now that we have sold the property which previously consumed so much of our time, energy and finances.

To say this was an enthusiastic and rousing exercise that got everyone actively involved is an understatement. Dan was heard to say ***“If you are leaving tonight and you’re not excited by all these great ideas, please check your pulse!”***



First, members shared their ideas about what they thought was most important about the Grange. From the many individual thoughts shared, three themes seemed to emerge to describe Perry Valley Grange:

- **Social Opportunities** (*we like to get together with one another*)
- **Community Service** (*we believe helping others is important*)
- **Focused Leadership** (*we want to be an organization that makes a positive difference*)



Professor Dan Foster

Having identified these areas of importance, the leaders helped us understand these are the **values** of the Grange and from there we were quickly able to write a simple statement to describe ourselves:

Perry Valley Grange is a social organization, focused on service and leadership.

Next small random groups brainstormed the kinds of projects and activities that would support our values statement. After each group shared their thoughts, everyone had an opportunity to cast their votes ranking the ideas using colored adhesive dots. Ideas receiving the most dots became the priorities for the future.



Ranked Priorities

(in order from highest within each category)

Focused Leadership

- Sponsor outstanding educational programs at meetings open to public
- Introduce cultural opportunities to residents
- Become a catalyst for economic growth of area

Community Service

- Become involved with Ronald McDonald House
- Lead a backpack project to provide weekend food for needy children
- Continue involvement with FFA Hunger Banquet
- Develop projects that work directly with students

Social Opportunities

- Have a visitation program to another Grange
- Hold a movie night
- Expand Christmas party & other special events

The leaders challenged Perry Valley Grange to set reasonable and attainable goals in each area. It was agreed that in 2015 it was realistic to believe the Grange could sponsor:

- 6 outstanding educational programs, incorporating topics that appeared in all of the priority areas
- 3 major community service projects

- 3 social events

To accomplish this aggressive list of tasks, it was agreed that small working committees were needed. Volunteers with a passion for each area are needed and will meet at the next Grange meeting on February 13th to begin the more detailed work required for implementation:

- Program (education) Committee
- Community Service Committee
- Social Committee

A fourth committee for Fund Raising is also needed to provide the financial resources to make all the other work possible.

Professor Dan challenged the Grange to use the opportunity provided by the sale of the property to strike out in new and exciting ways. Acknowledging this is a big task, he reminded us many times that ***“Inch by Inch, Life’s a Cinch”***. This catchy phrase encourages us to take just one step at a time in setting and attaining goals.

Our “homework assignment” from this January planning program was to complete a **SWOT** analysis. It’s easy – think about and simply jot down the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities** and **threats** facing our Grange as we move into the future.

Strengths and **weaknesses** are generally considered to be **internal** attributes of the Grange, whereas **opportunities** and **threats** are mostly **external** forces. By identifying these issues, we can better plan what kinds of activities are possible and most likely to succeed.



A great deal was accomplished in this two hour planning session, wouldn’t you agree? The possibilities are endless, limited only by our imaginations and willingness to try new things.