

Community Comment Jan. 5th, 2015

By Jon Sapper

New Year's Resolutions

Well it's that time of year again when we make resolutions that are impossible to keep. Yea I'm gonna lose 30 lbs, yea I'm gonna exercise more, yea I'm gonna eat less carbs and eat less sugar and yea I'm gonna go to the gym every day. Not a chance! I just want to be average. That's why I like Jay Leno's rationale where he says, "Now, there are more overweight people in America than average weight people, so overweight people are now the average. Which means, being overweight I've already met my New Year's resolution." Love it. Many people do look forward to the New Year so they can have a completely new start on their old habits. I'm actually more impressed if you tell me what your resolution is for today. It's more likely to happen.

I do have a 2015 wish for our community, that this is the year we have the courage to tackle the really tough issues. Pick one..... Our fragile health care system where access for many is only through the emergency room and preventative care is not even on the radar; homelessness, where we see the lives of broken men and women displayed on our streets every day of the year; childhood poverty, where several thousand, yes several thousand local children start out with a strike against them; addiction, where those suffering and wanting help have almost no access to medical services and the support research shows is necessary to turn their lives around; hunger, where we serve over 12,000 meals a month through Food for People; economic development, where a healthy diversified growing business community will lead to more prosperity and help to address some of the issues I raise above.

Other people aren't going to solve these complex challenges. We have to do it and they won't be solved in a day. I hope we have the commitment. Sometimes we are content, though, with working on the symptoms of these tougher issues. Let me give an example. The Backpack Program that provides weekend meals for low income children is wonderful and I am one of its strongest supporters. But, I caught myself the other day complimenting others on the fact they are providing 50 more backpacks every month. We slapped each other on the back and said, "Isn't this great work." I then thought, wait a minute. Yes, we need to continue to provide these backpacks, but our real goal should be to eliminate the need for

the Backpack Program by ending childhood hunger and poverty. Once we do that, then we can slap each other on the back.

2015 will provide opportunities for each one of us to become more involved in our community to work on these important issues. Let's have the courage to start and the commitment to stay the course for the long term.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.