What’s Next Wood County

Press Release

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How are we building an inclusive community? Join the conversation Monday night .

Have you ever noticed the signs around town at entrances to Parkersburg that say “We are building an inclusive community?” The signs have faded after 10 years but Parkersburg is on record as a member of the National League of Cities Inclusive Communities program. A grassroots community initiative, What’s Next Wood County, in partnership with representatives of the city, county, law enforcement, nonprofits, and higher education, wants to find out how we are doing reaching that goal of building an inclusive and welcoming community. What’s Next Wood County member Jean Ambrose said, “People in our group have said that those signs helped them make the decision to move to the Mid Ohio Valley. We think that these values make a dynamic and thriving community that people will want to move to and stay to raise their families or retire, knowing this is a community that respects all people. ”

The public is invited to participate in a community conversation Monday, January 16 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Judge Black Annex in downtown Parkersburg. Refreshments will be served so people can come directly from work and expect to find something to eat while they join the conversation.

Representatives from county and city government, law enforcement, local colleges and non-profits will share their efforts to foster an inclusive community. The public will then have the opportunity to share their experiences in small groups and with the official representatives and engage in a thoughtful dialogue about how we can all work together to build an inclusive community.

What’s Next Wood County member Jean Ambrose said, “ Dr. Martin Luther King said, ‘Diversity and inclusion are about giving value to every human being, no matter our differences. Whatever affects one directly, affect all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.’ “Ambrose continued, “We can’t find out about how we’re all doing in our community unless we talk to each other. We’re creating a space where that kind of dialogue can happen.”

The Inclusive Communities program was spearheaded by then Clarksburg, WV, mayor Jim Hunt, who was national president of the League of Cities in 2006, a first for a West Virginian and a small town mayor.

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