



MSCD hits 30,000 volunteer hour milestone

Every year, thousands of people come to the Ames Main Street Cultural District (MSCD) to enjoy fun events, to dine and shop, or to just stop and smell the beautiful flowers. What many may not realize is just how many volunteer hours go into making downtown Ames the vibrant area it is. The district started tracking volunteer hours when it became an official Main Street Community

in 2009. This month the MSCD reached 30,000 hours in volunteer service.

“Our volunteers logged over 5,000 hours last year alone,” said Cindy Hicks, MSCD Executive Director. “I am often amazed at all of the tasks these people do to make downtown an area the entire community can enjoy.”

Volunteers organize Main Street events like Fire Fly Country Night, ArtWalk and MusicWalk, the 4th of July parade, Oktoberfest, Main Street Bike Night and Snow Magic. And while events are fun to be involved in, there is also plenty of “dirty” work that needs to be done downtown.

“Do you like the beautiful flowers downtown? Volunteers not only plant the flowers, they come back and pull the weeds later in the season,” said Hicks. “Volunteers pick up trash around the district and varnish the beautiful benches.”

There are also volunteers working on future economic development for downtown, while others are concentrating on historic preservation.

“Whatever your passion may be, we seem to have a role you can fill,” said Hicks.

According to federal government statistics, every volunteer hour in Iowa is worth \$20.93. When you do the math, this means Main Street volunteers have given \$628,000 in labor to making downtown Ames a better place.

“If we had to pay them to have all of the nice things we have downtown, we could not,” said Hicks. “But, Albert Einstein said ‘Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts.’”

With that in mind, Hicks says she knows people volunteer for an endless variety of reasons. Many people want to gain experience, acquire new skills, meet new people, or expand their network of contacts as a way to get a new job or start a career. Others just want to give back to their community, help a friend, or promote a worthwhile activity. Some do it because it makes

them feel good. Downtown volunteers, made up of downtown business owners and others in the community, give their time to the very heart of Ames. They do this because they care enough about our historic downtown to make sure it is here for future generations to enjoy.

“These are ordinary people doing extraordinary work,” said Hicks. “Without them, I could not and would not, want to do the job I have. These large and small acts, given freely, are what bind communities together.”

To learn more about how you can get involved with the Main Street Cultural District go to www.amesdowntown.org.

***The Main Street Cultural District** was established on January 1, 2004. Its mission is to advance and promote downtown as the destination district in the heart of our community. To keep updated on MSCD happenings, become a fan of the Main Street Cultural District on Facebook, bookmark www.AmesDowntown.org, or contact our office at 515-233-3472. MSCD is an affiliate organization of the Ames Chamber of Commerce.*