A LETTER FROM THE COORDINATOR

It has been a great pleasure to have been brought on this year as the My Meadville Project Coordinator. I joined the team in February of 2017 during a time of transition, but, with the help of a newly invigorated Leadership Team, we accomplished a great deal. This report will tell you more, but I’d like to take a minute to reflect on what I’ve come to learn as the most important part of that statement: “with the help of a... team.” This year and this work has taught me about working with people. It has taught me about understanding people’s strengths and what they can bring to the table. A process such as Heart & Soul involves constant problem-solving. Finding answers and charting a proper course involves all hands on deck, new and old. I’m proud to say we’ve started assembling such a crew. We have new faces in the mix with fresh ideas who have yet to hold leadership roles in our town. We have folks deeply entrenched in the the power structures of our town with decades of knowledge about the social and political dynamics at play. What keeps me going through the toughest of problems is the fact that so many people from so many corners of our town are working together to solve them. We’re doing this as part of the My Meadville Heart & Soul process, but if there’s anything that I hope will continue beyond the duration of the project, it’s this ethos of collaborative problem-solving- that we all have something to contribute in solving the problems that face our community and that we can do so when we all have a seat at the table and are recognized as experts of our own lived experiences.

NEW ADDITIONS

We are so fortunate to have expanded our Leadership Team in 2017. Our new Team members bring enthusiasm, new ideas, and support to the project at a time when we greatly needed it. Welcome!

In addition, we are so thankful to have the continued dedication of our continuing Leadership Team members!

Heather Fish
Zach Norwood
Mar McIntire
Jack Harkless
Peter Zimmer
Delaney Rohan
Nancy Mangilo-Bittner
Deb Lehman
Stephanie Martin
Jill Withey
OUR CONNECTIONS

Over the last year, we've had the pleasure of connecting with the following organizations:

Academy Theater
Active Aging
All Citizens Together
Allegheny College
Chanellock
CHAPS
Civic Engagement at Allegheny College
Creating Landscapes for Families
Co-Op Preschool
Common Roots
Community Wellness Initiative
Crawford County Planning Commission
Crawford County Systems of Care
Creating Landscapes for Families
Creating Landscapes Learning Center
Fairview Fairmont
Food for Thought
Gill Commons
Grow Meadville
Market House
Meadville Area Senior High School
Meadville Area Collaborative
Meadville Area Recreation Complex
Meadville Chamber of Commerce
Meadville Children's Center
Meadville Medical Center Foundation
Meadville Neighborhood Center
Meadville Public Library
Meadville Redevelopment Authority
Meadville Time Trade
MOMS Club of Meadville
PFLAG
Rotary Club
Second Saturday Community Markets
Showing Up for Racial Justice
Thankful Thursday
Tru Grit
Unitarian Universalist Church
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

We've also connected with hundreds of Meadville residents. Here is the demographic breakdown:

[Charts showing demographic breakdown of race, gender, income, and age]
SUMMER IN THE CITY

We spent the summer gathering stories from the people of Meadville to uncover what matters most.

Delaney engages residents in a mapping activity at Thunder in the City.

Deb stands in our story booth inviting folks in for a cup of coffee during the Recovery Celebration at Diamond Park.

Community members engage in discussion after watching a local film about the region’s economy, part of the Film 4 Thought series.

Residents share “their” Meadville at a Second Saturday Community Market.

Residents share their favorite thing about Meadville at a Park Party.

We conduct one-on-one interviews like this one with Mayor Stearns.
CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY

In October 2017, 150 community members converged at our Community Celebration. People came together for a wonderful meal (many thanks to all of our local restaurants who donated food!) and to delve into the data we’d collected through interviews, story circles, and more. Using over 1400 data points pre-sorted into 9 themes, teams worked together to summarize what matters most to people about Meadville. Some teams completed the task, others did not, but all were successful in helping us to make sense of the stories we gathered.

THE EVOLUTION OF OUR COMMUNITY VALUES

2015
Meadville was awarded a grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council to implement the Orton Family Foundation's Community Heart & Soul process.

Spring 2016
We piloted the story-gathering process with postcards at community events.

Fall 2016
We officially launched the project and began conducting interviews and story circles.

Spring 2017
We expanded our interview Team and, with the help of our wonderful volunteers, increased the number of people we were able to hear from.

Summer 2017
We attended events and gathered stories in as many ways as we could. We also started hosting listening sessions where we listened to stories to uncover what people value most about Meadville.

Fall 2017
150 people came together at our Community Celebration in October to create a first draft of value statements that communicate our common values. The My Meadville Leadership Team finalized some of the statements that were not completed at the event.

TODAY
We are taking our draft statements back out into the community for input. We want to make sure they represent the values that we all share, so we’re seeking input from EVERYONE!
COMMUNITY THEMES & VALUES

The statements below reflect the first DRAFT of our community value statements. We are seeking feedback through spring of 2018 so that we are confidant that we have a set of statements that reflect the common values we hold for Meadville. You can weigh in at www.mymeadville.org/review

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**Education**
We value a quality local education system that provides a safe learning environment for all students to become productive citizens.

**Health & Safety**
We will be a drug-free community that is aware of and has fair access to quality support services, health care, and safety networks.

**Children & Youth**
We value youth-centered programming and safe accessible spaces that support youth and prepare them for a fulfilling future.

**Economic Opportunity**
We value a community that encourages growth in local businesses and downtown, provides quality jobs, and involves people in the local economy in order to improve the quality of life for all residents.

**Nature**
We value a community that has easy access to natural resources and recreational amenities that add beauty and opportunities for physical activity and recognize our responsibility to conserve our environment.

**Inclusion**
We value a local community that celebrates and accepts all of the differences among individuals that keep our town vibrant and culturally beautiful.

**Local Amenities**
We value unique special places, businesses and events that create a sense of community identity, pride and togetherness. We also value a convenient and flexible local transportation system that makes important places accessible for all residents.

**Community Engagement**
Meadville values its unity, spirit of cooperation, possibilities and perseverance that are demonstrated by local initiatives and community events because they bring people together across difference and facilitate closeness and positive interactions.

**Small Town**
We value the close-knit, friendly, small-town vibe with community events, celebrations, and services which foster supportive, inclusive relationships that create a more rounded community.
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The next phase in the Heart & Soul process is Phase 3: Make Decisions. In this phase, we will develop goals and ideas for action pertaining to our value statements. These goals and action ideas will be developed with and vetted by our community and will make up a comprehensive plan for our community. A more detailed action plan will be made available in mid to late January.

If you have ideas for action, email coordinator@mymeadville.org, call 814-337-8206 or find us on the second floor of the City Building. We’d love to hear from you!

WHAT’S ALREADY UNDERWAY?

The Meadville Area Teen Lounge is in the works! We heard from so many people that Meadville’s teens need a place to go. Thanks to a partnership between the Unitarian Universalist Church and the Meadville Neighborhood Center, a teen lounge is being built in the basement of the UU!

We also heard about the need for an indoor playspace for families with young children. The First Presbyterian Church of Meadville will open its doors on Tuesdays from 1pm to 3pm for families with young children to come and play. Shout out to Going Places and the Meadville Neighborhood Center for moving this forward!

In response to the feedback we got about our city’s built environment, especially in our downtown, we partnered with the City of Meadville to apply for a grant to update our zoning ordinance to reflect what people want to see. The update will likely emphasize historic preservation, increase walkability, and be easy to read and understand.
My Meadville (Meadville Heart & Soul) is supported by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and the Orton Family Foundation Community Heart & Soul.
We are supported locally by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Meadville.