

All Can Play Roles in Moving County Forward

Guest OpEd by Mary Willmer-Sheedy, Rock County 5.0 Co-Chair
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As we move into 2011, we do so with hope and optimism for a brighter future and a stronger, more vibrant community. The year 2010 was one of developing and building strategies that will diversify our economy and place our community's name among those that are truly creative and bold.

My co-chairwoman, Diane Hendricks, and I are honored to be part of the leadership team for Rock County 5.0.

Rock County 5.0 is the five-year public/private economic development plan that is charged with implementing economic development strategies in our county. We've had a very successful launch with more than \$1 million invested, the launch of our website and the successful completion of the Small Business Plan Contest. We've had the first and only Wisconsin sites officially designated as "shovel ready" for industries and distribution companies. And we've released our first Food Processing and Technology Video, among many other initiatives.

We are working on some major projects for 2011, including the Interstate 39 corridor, as well as work on partnering with local developers and real estate professionals in securing tenants and buyers for properties in Rock County. When we do this, it has an immediate effect on home values, community philanthropy and overall quality of life.

We need every citizen in Rock County to be engaged in Rock County 5.0. It's easy.

- 1) Go to the websites: www.rockcounty5.com or www.rockcountyalliance.com.
- 2) Talk to your own companies about being involved in Rock County 5.0. Invest in it-or talk to suppliers who work with your company and encourage them to consider locating in Rock County.
- 3) Support local businesses. Shop in Rock County whenever possible.
- 4) Most important, talk positively about Rock County. This is our home.

This is where our children attend school. We need to be proud of our community and we need to all be "Ambassadors of Optimism." Imagine the possibilities for the future. Someday, Rock County cities could be listed among those that are the "Best Places to Live in the U.S."

Our schools could be ranked at the top of the list for "Best Schools in the U.S." And most important, our children will want to come back to Rock County to live and work.

The future is in all of our hands. It's up to us to reach out and take hold of it. We have a choice. The team at Rock County 5.0 has made a choice to focus on the future. We need to understand and respect our past, but we need to move forward to build a strong community. We hope that you all choose to come along with us to make Rock County "America's Finest Community."

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