



Dear Conference Participant:

When Iowans are asked, “What is a healthy community?” they may give entirely different answers. The answers may deal with such matters as clean water; safe streets, parks and recreation, great schools, well-designed neighborhoods, or a living wage for workers. Whatever the answers, they impact the health of those who live in that community. A healthy community depends on many factors outside health services; it requires a broad-based, community-wide effort to improve the quality of life—bending trends toward a more positive future for everyone.

This civic engagement and cohesion are part of Iowa’s past. Without friends and neighbors, early settlers were helpless against illness, hazardous weather, devastating prairie fires, and isolation. To survive in a harsh environment, these new Iowans recognized the need to share their burdens and celebrate their successes.

The grand old barns that still dot Iowa’s landscape are a reminder of that time when the barn raisers pooled their efforts to raise a barn in a much shorter period than if it were done by a few. Working together helped these builders see themselves as a community with shared values.

Like the barn raisers of the past, the new barn raisers are engaged in improving the quality of life for themselves, their neighbors, and their friends. Building a playground, inventing a machine needed to surface a community-supported bike path, combating bullying, creating food banks to reduce food insecurity, raising funds for a wellness center and sharing it with students from another county are but a few examples of what’s happening across the state.

I invite you to be part of a conference that celebrates the successes in making Iowa communities more vibrant and livable and continuing the tradition of community building. Our future will be brighter!

Sincerely,

Chester J. Culver
Governor