

Brighton-Pittsford Post – “From the Supervisor” column – June 11, 2015 issue
Submitted by Pittsford Town Supervisor Bill Smith

Community

So many of you have sought me out personally, or phoned or emailed, to say how much you enjoyed the Town’s recent Paddle and Pour festival. From many of these comments a common theme emerges: a delight and satisfaction in connecting, in convivial circumstances, with friends and neighbors.

This strikes a chord with me. I've become aware more and more of something that happens in connection with some of the projects we've launched from Town Hall. Quite apart from accomplishing the immediate goal of an undertaking such as the Canal Lock 62 rehabilitation, for example, or cleaning up the Auburn trail, or figuring out how to save an historic barn from destruction, something larger happens.

I think of it as "community building." And please don't misunderstand: it doesn't happen because of what an elected official like me does, or what we do in government, although sometimes it can happen alongside those things. It's what happens when people of good character and good intent join together in common purpose.

I saw it all around me when high school students, Rotary Club members, Canal Society members and canal enthusiasts joined in the ongoing rehab of our historic canal lock. I felt the strength of this phenomenon when clergy and parishioners of Christ Church joined Interact Club students from Menden and Sutherland high schools, Rotarians and others, to clean up the Auburn Trail along the site of our soon-to-be nature preserve by the canal.

I've seen it in the stunningly impressive work of Saints Place, a project of St. Louis Church that clothes newly-arrived refugees and furnishes their homes, whose facilities I visited a few weeks ago. In the work of the volunteers in Pittsford’s Village who created the delightful Village Farmers Market. In the mission and programs of Chabad of Pittsford. I felt it at the 200th anniversary celebration for Allen Creek Elementary School: a vital part of our larger community and, simultaneously, a community within itself. I saw it in the beer tent and in the artists’ tent at Paddle and Pour. And in citing these examples I’ve barely scratched the surface of community building going on around us and among us.

More than accomplishing a tangible goal. More than cleaning up a trail, clothing and welcoming newly-arrived Americans, enjoying food and music or watching our crew teams race on the canal. It's people coming together, connecting, discovering common interests, learning from one another, creating and strengthening relationships.

I call it community building. You may think of it as something else. By any name, a splendid thing to behold.

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