

*Sainte Marie Foundation
P.O. Box 156
Sainte Marie, IL 62459*

_____, 2007

Dear Friends of Ste. Marie,

Since August, 2007, a group of committed people have been working to establish a charitable foundation for Sainte Marie.

Why? Because those of us who have left Sainte Marie realize that the village is still a gem – a wonderful example of how a small town can survive amidst all the changes that have taken place in the past 20-30 years.

What's Happening in Town?

Few other small towns have survived as well as Sainte Marie. The village is still pristine. A Chicago friend who visited with me said she wonders how they all get the grass the same height – “and even the ditches are mowed,” she marveled.

The Gas Station has reopened, after all these years, with a well-stocked mini-market. The Hideout restaurant and bar draws people from all over the area to their fish fry on Friday night. The High Benders bar is still a rollicking success. They occupy probably the oldest building in town, right next to the American Legion. Hartrich's Meat Processing has award-winning sausages and is expanding a budding catering business.

The sawmill is still there. The Monday night dances at the church hall attract numerous volunteer musicians and around 100 dancers from as far away as Vincennes every week of the year. Ron Kirts has retired, selling his business to Parrish Plumbing, Heating and AC. DM Welding, owned by Don Geltz, is a new successful company just south of St. Mary's cemetery. Plastic doghouses are molded in the old Case implement building. An auction house rents the old hardware store and has auctions on Saturday night.

But Ste. Marie, like all small towns everywhere, struggles to keep going. There is no longer a resident priest at St. Mary's; the Newton pastor is responsible for the parish and says mass on Saturday night and several mornings during the week.

There are more regulations from the state and federal governments regarding water, sewage, etc.

New residents are moving in who are unfamiliar with the town's history, customs and traditions. Several old historical houses are unoccupied and rapidly declining. There are fewer and fewer people with the time and interest to support all that needs to be done to keep the town viable.

Why a Foundation?

For some time, I have believed that those of us who left Sainte Marie could help the little hometown that gave us all such a good start. This past summer, I pledged to start a tax-exempt charitable Foundation so that those of us who want to give back can do so. Our purpose is simple – to improve the village in whatever way we can and also to preserve the history of Sainte Marie.

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We have grand ideas, such as (and these are simply “dreams” at this time):

- helping the Community Club with projects, such as repairing the swimming pool.**
- owning a house that former residents could rent when they come back to visit.**
- buying the old bank and restoring it.**
- starting a museum to preserve the history of this great little town.**
- hosting a homecoming for previous Ste. Marie residents**
- hosting an arts weekend** where participants (recruited from urban areas) might stay in town (renting rooms in local homes) and attend workshops on painting, writing, music, etc. Many urban people have never experienced living in a small, rural town Even our children and grandchildren might enjoy hearing the church bells ring three times a day or taking an early morning stroll with all the “walkers” before stopping at The Gas Station mini-mart for a coffee.

I have received much positive response from Ste. Marie residents about the Foundation – as well as from those who still have Ste. Marie in their hearts though they are far away. I hope you are someone who also wants to help.

Our First Project

In mid-October, 2007, the Foundation Board of Directors were busy filing papers to get the organization established as a charitable Foundation when we learned about an issue that has been bugging town leaders for some time. A house across the street from the old church hall has been abandoned for several years. Water had filled the basement; a ragged blue tarp covered part of the roof where an improvement project had been aborted. A front gutter had partially fallen off. The mortgage company that held the property apparently realized that the house was worth little or nothing and had not even proceeded with foreclosure.

Jasper County issued a notice that taxes were unpaid and up for auction. The Foundation paid the back taxes, and if all goes well, could own the house and property within two years, thus helping Village government take care of an eyesore.

We were not ready for this – having not yet received our tax exempt status from the IRS, but we knew this was one project that fit our mission of preventing community deterioration. So we plunged in anyway. I made an initial donation to the Foundation to pay the taxes (and also fund start-up costs).

What We Need

We need to raise money to pay subsequent taxes (for two years) on this abandoned house and any other project that needs immediate action. But we would also accept in-kind help too. For example, we need someone to create a website for us, or help rehab an old house if we get one as a donation, or help set up a history museum, or be a workshop leader for the arts weekend. Just tell us what you would like to do, and we will figure out how you can help.. ***Please remember how much Sainte Marie gave to you as you were growing up – and give back.*** Also, forward this letter to other Ste. Marie alums who might be interested, or send us names.

Thank you for your interest in Ste. Marie. I live in Chicago, but my hometown lives in my heart!
Sincerely,

Patricia Reis (patreisprpr@yahoo.com)
President, Sainte Marie Foundatio

Yes, I want to help the Sainte Marie Foundation. Enclosed is my check for:

\$20 \$40 \$100 \$1000 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (Home) _____ (Work) _____ (Cell) _____

E-Mail Address _____

My donation is *in memory of*: (print) _____

Or *in honor of*: (print) _____

(Names will be included in the quarterly Foundation newsletter and/or annual report.)

Here are some names and addresses of other Ste. Marie "alums" who might like to receive news about Sainte Marie:

Name

Name

Address

Address

City State Zip

City State Zip

How else could you help? Do you have any special skills or interests we could use? We'd also like some news for our Newsletter. Use back of sheet – for additional names too!

Make check payable to *Sainte Marie Foundation* and send to: **Sainte Marie Foundation, P.O. Box 156, Sainte Marie, IL 62459**

Gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. The Sainte Marie Foundation is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization.

The Sainte Marie Foundation

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