

WHY RURAL MISSOURI IS IMPORTANT AND WHY PEOPLE LIKE LIVING HERE

THE MONEY MARATHON BY ED DOUGLAS CFP®
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One of the boards I serve on is the Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri. This Board has representatives serving 18 counties and I represent Livingston County. Our mission is to encourage philanthropy in the region and facilitate regional vitality and cooperation.

Our board has read books on the subject of the decline of middle America, including Caught in the Middle, a book which outlines how many high paying manufacturing jobs have gradually been transferred overseas as a result of globalization and how farms have gotten bigger in general, shrinking the number of total farmers in rural areas. Those two factors have caused population shrinkage, economic decline and loss of high paying jobs making it very challenging for middle rural America.

At a recent board planning retreat several members outlined studies showing the decline in economic vitality in Northwest Missouri, which led to discussion as to what we can do to help facilitate regional cooperation and planning to stop or at least slow down the trend.

HOW PHILANTHROPY CAN HELP RURAL AREAS:

I should note that although Livingston County is facing the same challenges of the other counties, we are the envy of many counties in our area that wish they were doing as well as we are doing. As an example, as mentioned, one of our stated goals is to encourage philanthropy and we are promoting that through education and providing mechanisms to make it easier for people to leave wealth to causes that are important to them as donors. Studies show that there will be a huge transfer of wealth in the next 20 to 30 years to the next generation and it is important that a significant part of this transfer end up in Northwest Missouri. How important is this? Think about the foundations that our area is fortunate to have currently. Some of these foundations are the Joe and Lenore Lambert Foundation, the Mervyn Jenkins Foundation, the Jerry Litton Family Foundation, the Hedrick Foundation, the Roger Browning Foundation, and the FM and Gladys McCall Foundation just to name a few. These foundations have played significant roles in

providing funds for needed projects such as the Litton Ag Center, the Performing Arts Center, the New Litton Stadium, the YMCA and many others. As you can see, philanthropy by itself can play a huge role in economic vitality and believe it or not philanthropy can be done on very small levels but they all can make a difference.

MY REASONS WHY RURAL MISSOURI IS IMPORTANT AND WHY I LIKE LIVING HERE

As our Board discussed the problem of regional vitality and what to do about it, the thought occurred to me that we need to be able to articulate to others why working to invigorate our county, region and rural Missouri is important. As I have thought about this subject here are some of my reasons why working to maintain rural Missouri is important.

- 1) Rural Values: I believe our rural values, beliefs and upbringing are worth preserving. There are some differences as to how we look at life, especially as compared to the coasts.
- 2) Self Actualization: In rural areas it is easier to help lead and to participate and to be involved in a meaningful way than it is in huge cities. I think this can help individual lives be more meaningful and productive. It is much easier to make a difference in a smaller town and county than it would be in a town or county of several million people.
- 3) Quality of Life:

*Safety: I don't have statistics on this but I believe that crime, particularly violent crime is much worse in the cities than here. I know I feel safer than I would living in a big city.

*Transportation: It is really nice being able to drive five minutes and get everywhere you need to go. In the cities, you fight traffic jams constantly and can drive an hour each way to work.

*Space: Rural America by definition has more wide open space and room to spread out. I like that. I don't think I would like to be boxed in.

*Knowing your neighbors: I know it is impossible to know everyone no matter what the size of the town. But in small town American you have a sense of knowing everyone which helps in building relationships, doing business with people you know, and people extending a helping hand when someone is in need.

It will be interesting to see what other ideas on this subject come from our board. I wonder if they will feel like I do, or will come up with even more reasons? Regardless, for me rural Missouri is worth our efforts to preserve a way of life for our children and grandchildren.

Remember that every investor's situation is unique and that it is important to review your specific situation with a financial professional.

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