

Celebrating what is right in our community

It is common for folks to focus on what needs to be done or what isn't going very well. And by bringing attention to those areas, change can be made and progress can happen.

However, sometimes we forget to celebrate what is right and applaud what is strong and good.

Since we are all in this process of economic development together, and we know this process is ongoing, we have a lot of work to do over the months and years ahead.

Let's take this opportunity to focus on our strengths and what we are proud of in our community.

Adding to many previous economic development studies, Forward Sheridan engaged citizens and the business community in the "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats" process last fall.

Business representatives and participating citizens identified strengths that define Sheridan. Topping the list is Sheridan's location.

The beautiful mountains and open spaces offer recreational opportunities from fishing to skiing, camping to rock climbing, hunting to hang gliding.

In addition to the opportunities to play, our wealth of natural resources attracts industry and businesses that provide good jobs.

True West magazine recently awarded Sheridan the "Number One Western

Town in America" designation. Our Western identity, culture and historic landmarks all contributed to this achievement.

Events such as the Sheridan-WYO Rodeo, Don King Days and our county fair as well as places including our museums, the Sheridan Inn and local historic battlegrounds make Sheridan an attractive Western destination.

Local guest ranches offer visitors a taste of the West, including horseback riding, fishing and relaxing away from televisions and fax machines.

We have a talented and expanding art community with an impressive number of nationally and internationally recognized artists and musicians who generously share their talents.

Art galleries are sprinkled throughout the community, and artists-in-residence programs regularly bring new talent to our area. Art and musical festivals offer occasions to be a part of and appreciate the talent right at our back door.

Our excellent educational system is often cited as a reason for choosing this area to live in. Sheridan County schools produce more National Merit Scholars

A Community Affair

David
DeBolt

Planning for Sheridan's economic development



per capita than anywhere else in the United States.

The school districts and private schools offer choices, and collaboration with Sheridan College can provide seamless and sometimes concurrent transitions from high school to college.

Organizations such as the WYO Theater, the YMCA and our county library system complement the school system with additional educational activities and opportunities.

The health care provided by our county hospital, the VA hospital, medical professionals and clinics is outstanding. Though too small to be the best provider in all areas, we are fortunate to have excellent professionals and outstanding facilities and equipment.

In addition to the strengths listed above, Sheridan offers a positive environment for entrepreneurs and has strong assets in our knowledge-based workers, attractive tax structure and vibrant, healthy and historic downtown business district.

Last, but certainly not the least of our strengths, is our wealth of philanthropic foundations and our not-for-profit sector.

Sheridan County is fortunate to have a thriving population of not-for-profit organizations which provide services for our citizens and a strong group of philanthropic foundations which support our community in a variety of ways.

We have a lot of work ahead to ensure Sheridan's healthy community and economic future, but there is no doubt that we also have great strengths that we can celebrate as we engage in that work.

If you would like to be involved with Forward Sheridan, or if you have any questions, please call 673-8004.

Editor's note: David DeBolt operates his own consulting business as a commercial construction project manager and works for Patconserv Inc. in property development.

A Sheridan School Board trustee for the past six years, he is involved in the Sheridan County Soccer Association, Recreation District coaching, Boy Scouts, and Rotary.

"A Community Affair" is a weekly column from citizens who support Forward Sheridan, a professional business organization of invested partners whose purpose is to develop and maintain a sound economy in Sheridan County. Philippe Chino is president/CEO of Forward Sheridan.