

Celebrating the Spirit of Our Community

by Dave Earling

Having been actively involved in this community since the late 1970s, I've developed a great appreciation for the depth and breadth of Edmonds' character. However, occasionally after all of these years, I am still struck by the impressive response to some new event which demonstrates our incredible spirit of community.

Events such as the outcome of an election, the overwhelmingly positive community reaction to the new plaza at the Edmonds Historical Museum, the impassioned response to the 5 Corners round-a-bout, or the excitement surrounding the purchase of the Civic Playfield all impress and even surprise me, and demonstrate how deeply people here care for their community.

Over this past weekend, I was pleasantly surprised once again.

Several weeks ago, the Chamber of Commerce came up with the idea of having a Clam Chowder Cook-off featuring local restaurants. A seemingly simple idea suddenly took on a life of its own!

The restaurant community stepped forward with eight participants. Add a great setting at the Edmonds Yacht Club, a beer garden, some music, a little competition - and just like that, some 700 people show up for a taste of the first-ever Clam Chowder Cook-off! In fact, folks were even lined up around the Yacht Club waiting for the doors to open!

A good idea? A better question might be: is it already scheduled for next year? Congratulations to the Chamber of Commerce on the outstanding success of this first-time event, and we look forward to seeing it again next year!

I had the good fortune to be invited to act as one of three judges in the competition. From the start, it was a fun, energetic atmosphere. Great food helped "set the table" for our community to come together and once again celebrate what I believe to be the core strength of Edmonds: a community which takes pride in itself, respects differing points of view and consistently demonstrates impressive community spirit.

Over time we have created a spirit of community by maintaining our downtown "small town" core, adding community celebrations such as the Edmonds Arts Festival, the 4th of July celebration, the Taste of Edmonds, the holiday Tree Lighting, the Summer Market, and preserving and celebrating our historic roots. All provide opportunities for people to gather and grow as a community.

Some physical changes also add to our identity and atmosphere. The Edmonds Center of the Arts (ECA), the marvelous expansions at Swedish Edmonds Hospital, the new Winco store, and the fresh identity for Salish Crossing all contribute to the richness of our community.

Lastly, we should all reflect on the value of the arts in our community. The ECA, the Arts Festival, the Cascade Symphony, Sno-King Choral, our dance and theater companies, the monthly downtown Art Walk, and numerous other events all bring a depth in the arts shared by few communities our size. Again, these events and their venues offer yet another opportunity for the community to gather.

It may sound a bit corny, but many communities in the Puget Sound strive to have what we have in Edmonds.

Just this past week, I heard that theme from one person who just moved here and two others who are in transition to Edmonds. All three parties are moving here because of our unique quality of life and stunning location on Puget Sound.

It is this pride in our community which binds us together. It is our core. That strong feeling of self-identity probably began around 1890 when George Brackett said, "Let's build it here!"