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NWMO

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NEWS

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Efforts are accelerating to create a new normal in northwest Missouri

A regional Communications CollaborACTION Team and Discovery Groups are forming as a result of broad public participation in The Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri's Regional Vitality initiative

ST. JOSEPH, Mo., June 11, 2020—Northwest Missouri has a new website designed to help maximize the potential of those who live, learn, work and play throughout the region. It is an online portal that is expanding each week to include helpful information, links, polls, surveys, discussion forums, and other interactive opportunities for individuals, organizations and communities. The platform has proven useful to nearly 2,000 visitors over the last two months as a central spot for COVID-19 support links. The growing website will be an "online front lobby" for those interested in learning about the region and joining Maximize NWMO's movement to connect and promote the area.

A Communications CollaborACTION Team has begun work on several projects for the summer and invites those with creative and social media skills to join the fun. Discovery Groups are also meeting on priority topics chosen by over 100 participants contributing to the Regional Community Conversations held online throughout May. Dates are posted on the website for discussions about high-speed broadband for all, business transition support, and several topics regarding food systems and entrepreneurship. Individuals and organizations can learn more and get involved by registering at www.maximizenwmo.org or emailing together@maximizenwmo.org.

Mary Hinde, president of The Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri, St. Joseph, Mo. said, "We have an opportunity to be more innovative in how we connect and promote our region's communities. The current pandemic is an example of how quickly organizations and residents can pivot to act together. This region is a great place to live and do business. Helping more people understand and build on the area's current and potential assets will lead to a stronger regional economy and prosperity for more people."

Rural regions across the nation are experiencing challenges that stem from attitudes and information that are inconsistent with 21st-century opportunities made possible through advanced technology and the willingness of people to band together and revitalize their communities.

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“One of our biggest challenges is to shift the mindset that rural isn’t a good place to make a living. Many people are discovering ways to thrive in northwest Missouri. We need to tell our kids and their parents about the opportunities they have to grow here. Working to involve people in our communities, whether they are native or new to the area, will also help them feel more welcome and wanted,” shared Randy Railsback, Green Hills Regional Planning Director and Missouri State Representative District 8 Candidate, Hamilton, Mo.

Maximize NWMO, the new name and brand for The Community Foundation’s regional vitality initiative is a decision and collaboration support system. The framework provides a path for how to lift up the many things that are going right in communities and how to be more effective at systems leadership, resiliency and leveraging resources.

There is already a lot of strategic planning, cooperation and funding projects happening in northwest Missouri by public and private entities. However, most of the resources are specific to a single focus such as business, education, health and wellness, downtown revitalization, neighborhoods, infrastructure and other special interests. Unconnected and reactive efforts can make progress slower and more complicated than those led with proactive big picture attitudes. Maximize NWMO encourages leaders to think about the long-term needs and desired results, as well as what can be done in the short-term. How? By listening to many voices, aligning priorities, and pooling time resources, talent and treasure to solve problems as effectively and efficiently as possible.

“We have a great opportunity right now to highlight northwest Missouri’s best features for ourselves and others. There are many great places to launch and test new ideas, work remotely, create a sense of belonging and enjoy the benefits of rural living in this region,” said Linda Place, Maximize Albany Lead, Albany, Mo. “Located here in the heart and soul of the country means we have access to the best of all worlds. If we can continue to grow access to high-speed broadband and the awareness level of all that northwest Missouri has to offer, our residents of all ages will not only survive but thrive as we come out of these challenging times.”

Maximize NWMO serves the region in a neutral role providing administrative, communications, data access, and coaching support on systems-thinking and community wealth building for individuals, communities and the region. The initiative’s Navigation Team supports leaders and communities who want to *dream big, decide wisely, and maximize our region’s potential by growing together*.

Maximize NWMO is the regional vitality initiative of The Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri. It is made possible through partnerships with Communities of Excellence 2026, the United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA-RD), University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Department of Economic Development, Northwest Missouri State University and Evergy.

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