KL005

Kathy Lee

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What do you love about Meadville?

That’s hard to say, because I feel like I was stuck in Meadville, really I stay here for my parents, but Meadville really doesn’t have a lot of stuff either for kids, or for things to advance, so I made sure that my kids left Meadville. It’s a nice place to raise kids – it was a nice place to raise kids, it wasn’t like the city, but maybe its getting like the city now…

Mmmhmm, we do have some challenges

Yes, we do

Do you have a favorite memory of living here

I’ve been here since I was 2, I was adopted from Cleveland and I came when I was 2. I was down on what they called West Street down there and it was a community of collective people and it was more of people knowing each other and integrated… and looking out, and if you did something bad, your mom would know because they would have told them, and you don’t see that any more the closeness, but those of us who came from the lower end of Meadville here, we still have a closeness that I don’t see any longer

Why do you think that is?

There was a big division when there was a flood and it changed the neighborhood – like you used to know everyone from one end of the street down to the other, and now I don’t think anybody knows who their neighbors are down the street, maybe their next store neighbor but it doesn’t go further than that - they don’t intertwine like they used to anymore.

Where was West Street – is it still here?

No, West Street was down behind where Valesky’s is and now it’s a highway – the bypass.

So, why do you stay in Meadville

When my parents passed, I just ended up staying. My kids moved on, but I worked here and have friends and just stayed – you know at this age it’s hard. I mean I will move once all my kids get out – I have a son here – my daughter already left so I’m hoping to be able to leave.

Where are you thinking about going?

That’s the trouble, I don’t know yet. I retired, and now I’m back to work so I have money to travel to see where I would like to go – I may end up back in Meadville, I don’t know.

Well what would make staying here easier for you? What could we change that you would think, yeah Meadville?

Mostly opportunities – opportunities for all types of people - there’s a lot of prejudice here that’s not open and it makes it hard – you know job wise and others – I mean some things change but overall it’s the same – maybe overall it’s a little better – but not much – it’s more hidden and not out in the open.

What is something that captures the spirit of Meadville?

Pizza Villa

Why do you think of Pizza Villa

I mean not necessarily this one, but the original one, and It’s something that has been here for years. I mean the name and I mean Pizza Villa and PNC - when Water street was different

What would you miss if it wasn’t here?

Pizza Villa

Anything else?

I can’t say too much because I’m really more of a home body. What I can say is that I miss – for Black families to come into Meadville and have a place – a community – we used to have Triple C and you know Elton – so what we really need is a place to congregate and we don’t have any place to go or to reunite you know. A long time ago, we also had the unity center here and it provided a place to go and it helped keep the kids off the street – a lot of kids got education and a lot of kids got jobs through there, and I don’t see anything now a days that is really focusing on our kids today.

So what do you think about Meadville is important to continue into the future? Would want to make sure is still here?

Pizza Villa (giggles) I don’t know , I think Meadville is changing a lot. You know old people, or people of different ages that is not into the younger group - I think it’s the old buildings that are no longer here – you know some of the old things that we have lost that I miss – we had a lot of second hand stores and you could go in and see old things – I kind of miss the old shops I would like the old shops where you could see antiques and old things.

What would you change to make Meadville even better?

What I would change would be unity among people…

How do you think that we could change that?

That is a hard question – because usually I feel that when you bring a problem up you should have a solution, but I don’t really have a solution. I don’t know – how you bring people together who don’t really want to be together. There are some churches now – I see mixed churches, so I think that is one way that things have changed, when I was coming up you didn’t see a mixed church, but now you do, so I think there are changes that are being made slowly.

So trying to build unity among people – and one way to do that would be to have opportunities to bring people together as in mixed churches. What else would you change to make Meadville better?

I think we need to control our kids too. I think the schools are lacking behind – I mean, I am not condemning the schools, but I think that we are not up to date with things that should be taught. The school districts are losing out because they teach math, English, this and that – but then it makes kids who know how to draw or like other things – it makes them lose out or feel stupid or doesn’t have the education because they don’t have the ability to do the math – but they do have ability/talent and I don’t think our education program is following up with every child to recognize their ability – instead of forcing on this is what you should learn or that is what you should learn – but now if that child likes to dance, then teach that child to dance have that curricular toward dance. We don’t, That’s what I would like to see, what is the child interested in? And maybe you would see more of a difference in our children – because everybody don’t like math, not everybody can be a musician, you know.

So, maybe opportunities to work with the kid on their own on what they are good at…

Yeah, yes

That maybe things are too regimented

Yes,

Okay. If you had one wish for Meadville, what would it be?

One wish for me, is that everyone would come here to CHAPS, because for as many jobs as I ever had, this is the most exciting, and different types of jobs – because no matter what type of disability they have, they smiling, they happy. There’s no negativity toward anyone it’s always a positive, and though I’m not always positive myself, that’s the feeling you get through here. I think that everyone should come through here just to feel the positiveness that they have in this place here. I’ve been in quite a few organizations, and I’m really interested in helping people, but this is an organization that really does that.

Anything else you want to tell me about Meadville?

I think that’s it…

It’s a nice beautiful town to raise children, and it’s a nice town for couples. (Laughing) I don’t think its really a nice town for single women when you want to find someone else. (laughing)

Yeah, well thank you very much – you have a great day.