

## Imagination

As I lay awake at 3:00 a.m., my mind scans my own recollections of the building I graduated high school from, a building we have come to refer to as the Cultural Center of Henry County, a name I struggle with, having the previous namesake of Napoleon Civic Center still tattooed in my brain. Images of terra cotta façade, fancy, cream colored, sculptural facing, laced into the still sound and beautifully laid dark red brickwork, flood my sleepless imagination with the brocade of rooftop balusters and engaging faces set in terra cotta tiles above the two doorways. I am imagining a brick mason, on a sunny day in 1921, laying the mortar bed for these elegant tile and red brick, and can only guess at the pride he took in being a part of constructing 'the new school'. Would he, today, be surprised that his mortar joints remain tight and fully intact, after more than 100 years? Would he give the nod to knock down this building he helped build, unable to imagine any further use of it?

Imagination. That is what is lacking. This Napoleon Civic Center or Cultural Center of Henry County, or whatever it may yet become, has the capacity to stir the imagination. The 747 seat auditorium has hosted music, dance and theater performances that transported audiences in their imaginations. Gymnasiums and athletic fields there have served as vehicles to transport young athletes, in their imaginations, to the highest levels of achievement. A number of those athletes even surpassed their imaginings and won at the highest level in the state and competed around the world. Classrooms there have carried young imaginations to amazing careers in their lives, leading to lifelong fulfillment. Those same classrooms await new imaginations and new fulfillments in other classes or they could even be imagined as a place to live. Large, beckoning spaces in the Center can be imagined as a youth center, where healthy time is spent rather than the streets and drugs and alcohol. In this building, once apparently the pride and joy of Napoleon, its schools and its builders, it takes imagination to stir the imagination.

Imagination took Columbus to the new world. Imagination took man to the moon and continues to take us beyond the solar system. Everything new took root in the imagination first. Nothing new ever arose from the same, old same old. And imagination is what makes life worth living.

This Center in my dreams and my awakenings possesses a power of synergy for the community. Synergy that stirs imagination during a play, during a foul shot attempt, in the asking of a girl across the room to dance, in a college class where a concept finally gels in a student's mind, in a new resident remembering study hall in the room she now calls home, in the CEO's wife, considering actually moving to Napoleon rather than living in Perrysburg, Maumee or Toledo. Imagination is what really carries us day to day. Work is only the thing that helps achieve what we have imagined. Imagination creates our families and friends. Imagination causes us to undergo the training that enables us to take on a new job.

That brick mason in 1921, I wonder if he lived on Webster St, perhaps. Or up on Clinton or maybe in Goosetown. I wonder if he could imagine his building, still in such amazing structural condition, would ever see those in his same school system and city so bent on removing the physical traces of his imagination. And, I wonder, would he surmise that imagination is apparently sorely lacking here, today.

*~Cultural Center Supporter*