

Door County's Charities

The essential ingredient in our quality of life

Charity is more important to Door County than to any other community in Wisconsin.

Yes, I know, that sounds like hyperbole. Our hyper-competitive society already spends too much effort labeling things as the most, least, best or worst of something. So generally I try to be more moderate in my approach to most things. But when it comes to our beloved peninsula, this is an unavoidable conclusion. Charity really is more important to Door County than to any other community in Wisconsin.

It's because the non-profit organizations of our community collectively play perhaps the most critical role in making Door County the unique community that it is, thereby attracting tourists, seasonal residents and retirees alike. Charity is also essential because it alleviates the challenges arising from the seasonal nature of our economy.

While the latter of those two observations is easy to understand, on the surface the former might seem a bit counterintuitive. After all, few of us consider charities as an economic engine. More often we think of the non-profit sector as an outgrowth of economic prosperity. While that holds true here as well, in Door County charities are an essential ingredient in what makes our community special.

Consider for a moment, what you love about Door County.

Perhaps it's our vibrant arts community. It surrounds us with beauty, fills the air with music, and inspires our soul.

We're blessed to have incredible live performances on the stages of the Door Community Auditorium, the Peninsula Players and the Third Avenue Playhouse. We laugh to the musicals of American Folklore Theatre and the comedies of Door Shakespeare. Midsummer's Music and the Peninsula Music Festival provide the soundtrack for our summer.

Young people from across the nation come to learn at the Birch Creek Music Performance Center. And the Peninsula School of Art and the Clearing Folk School nurture the artist that lay within us all. The list could go on and on. How many other communities our size can boast of such an abundance of cultural resources?

These cultural icons enrich our lives and make our community unique. And all of them are charities. Collectively, these non-profit arts organizations are an essential part of our quality of life and are a key component of the Door County brand. These charities are a major part of the reason people visit here and keep coming back each year.

But maybe it's not the arts that you love. Maybe what you love about Door County is our remarkable abundance of natural resources. From our lakeshore to the wetlands, our orchards to the meadows, the open spaces and rural roads – there is something about the beauty of this place that keeps us here or calls us back year after year.

So we count on the Door County Land Trust, the Door County Green Fund and the Nature Conservancy to work hard and protect environmentally important places. The Ridges Sanctuary is perhaps the most biologically diverse piece of property in all of Wisconsin – and you can learn even more at the family environmental learning center known as Crossroads at Big Creek.

Our shores and waters are guarded by organizations like the Door County Environmental Council and the Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership. Door County is also celebrated for its magnificent public parks. Each one of them is maintained and enhanced by vibrant citizens groups such as the Friends of Peninsula State Park, the Friends of Toft Point, the Newport Wilderness Society and the Friends of Whitefish Dunes.

The stewards and defenders of Door County's environmental treasures are

