

Letters and Commentary

Why I joined the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition

For those of you who know me, you know there are very few things I do lightly. I was born and raised like many of you, right here in Crisfield, and while it was not perfect, I have such fond memories of my childhood that when I left here in 1981 to start my college career, I always knew that someday I would return. You see, I remember growing up in a town that was thriving and vibrant.

Later working at Paul's Kitchen and Handy's, hanging out with my friends, going to the movies, Luigi's Pizza Parlor and Aunt Em's. Shopping at Grant's, Silco's or 5 and Dime store for an outfit (we couldn't afford Scher's (lol)), while my parents shopped at Acme or A&P for grocer-

ies. Some of you know exactly what I am talking about. So for me, after 20 years in a very lucrative job, but frustrated with the hustle and bustle of city life, I made my way back home.

But home was not the home I remembered. Like many places, it had become like a ghost town with a vast feeling of hopelessness and despair. Not knowing what to do, I, along with my sister and a group of friends, began the project, "It Takes a Village" just to give something for the young people to do. That was 2006. Little did I know that God would allow that journey to consume my life. It was on this journey that I met Councilwoman Charlotte Scott.



Darlene Taylor

I found her to be genuine and sincere in her concern for all the citizens in our community.

While at a City Council presentation, she outlined a plan to move our City forward, but what struck me the most, was her vision for Main Street. When I saw the drawing she had of what Main Street could be, "shops and outdoor cafés, cobblestone streets and people scurrying about, buildings with attractive awnings and a beautiful rainbow," something inside of me leapt. It was a feeling I had not felt since starting It Takes a Village.

So when the City Council rejected that vision and voted not to accept her proposal, I was very discouraged, and encouraged her not to give up. I ask, where is the vision and leadership for our City? How can I help our children to have hope and believe in themselves when all they see is pov-

erty and despair all around?

So while I could not fathom taking on one more project, how could I say no when asked to help with ideas to revive our City? So for more than a year our Team — the Board of the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition — from all walks of life, has worked together, not in isolation, but with input from the many citizens who came to our Community input meeting at the Woodrow Wilson Community Center, the business leaders who attended the community input meeting at the Crisfield Heritage Museum, and the many one-on-one meetings with other Citizens.

It was from these voices, along with the voices of those who worked on the Strategic Revitalization Plan and the Economic Development Task

See Commentary — Page 9

County Times 9/21/16

Commentary

Continued From Page 8

Force, that the Action Plan was created. In February of this year, the it was bound and ready for distribution. At the very next City Council meeting on March 9th, we presented the plan to the City Council, provided each member a copy and requested their input, ideas and recommendations; it is recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

So here we are 6 months later asking for support to help us bring positive change to our community, and we find ourselves at an impasse. Can we move forward? It is my prayer that we can. In no way do I believe that we alone know what's best for the City. We have to do this together. GCAC can't do it alone, and the City can't do it alone. If they could, they would have done so already. We need each other and that is the only way that we will ever revive our town: ONE CRISFIELD!

We need each other. Not black Crisfield and white Crisfield, but ONE CRISFIELD, where everyone has the opportunity to succeed. There is no selfish motivation in what we do. This is about prosperity for all, but we must first all see the value in what each brings to the table. This is what has allowed our group to flourish: Mutual Respect. My brother, a national motivational speaker and consultant, said it best: We must celebrate and embrace our diversity and

capitalize on the strengths of each. He tells the story of how in war times, the Indians were used by soldiers to send smoke signals because the enemy wouldn't understand them. What an excellent illustration of how our diversity can benefit the whole.

I am certain we can find many more examples here in Crisfield...it is a win-win for all. "Lest we work together....we fail."

We are grateful for our supporters and hopeful for those who are still uncertain, but we will not be discouraged by those who want no change. Our plan is to provide information each week on why we need City endorsement versus one project at a time and also what is in the Action Plan that we are asking you to support.... Stay tuned!

The winds of change are blowing in our community.... Can't you feel it? Highest regards,

**Darlene Taylor, Secretary
Greater Crisfield Action Coalition**