

A Graduation Gift Extraordinaire

High School Seniors in Humboldt Received their own Mailboxes

“Seniors were honored with a personalized mailbox, complete with a letter—an invitation to make Humboldt their home.”

BY LIZ HENDRICKS



Liz Hendricks

High school graduations are over. Most graduates' gifts from family and friends are spent: money, towels, gift cards, clothes, mailbox WHOA! A mailbox? Who would give a graduating senior a mailbox? Humboldt's Business Action Team, that's who.

That's right. It looks like Humboldt's Public Square leaders lived up to their name—"Dream Humboldt." At their May Commencement, graduating seniors each were honored with a personalized mailbox, complete with their first letter from their home town: an invitation to make Humboldt their home ... maybe now, maybe next year, maybe after college or graduate school or the birth of child number one. "We'd like to see you back in Humboldt" was the unmistakable plea.

Most of us want our youth to return in order to sustain and grow our communities. Maybe some of us have even expressed it aloud to other adults. But to take such bold action, to

purchase 42 mailboxes and present them one-at-a-time to each bright and shiny face of tomorrow: that, my fellow rural friends, is an incredible declaration of hope!

Some time back, the Dream Humboldt Business Action Team heard about Brookfield, MO

presenting their seniors a mailbox. Then this spring, they turned talk into action.

The Business Action team believes its best strategy for business development is to encourage its own residents and youth to grow businesses. So this all-volunteer team went to work raising funds for the mailbox project. Inspired by the team's ingenuity, the company from which they purchased the American-made mailboxes gave them a wholesale price, plus free shipping.

Then came the personal touch: each graduate's name—in school colors no less!—on the outside of each mailbox. An alumna designed the invitation that went in each mailbox.

You're invited: to make Humboldt your Home. Who: You! Humboldt High School, Class of 2013. When: Now... next year... whenever it's right for you. What to Bring: Bring your new friends, your families, and your talents. Why: Humboldt has a lot to offer. You may not see it now, but you will see it later. Humboldt is a friendly place to raise a family. It's a place where you have roots. It's never too late to come home. RSVP: This invitation from Dream Humboldt never expires!"

What if you had received such an invitation when you were 18 years old? What if every community reached out to its graduates with this open-arms welcome!

Mahatma Gandhi's challenge comes to mind: "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Dream Humboldt just became the change they imagined. **KCL**

LIZ HENDRICKS is president of Public Square Communities, Inc., and a community volunteer in Howard in Elk County.



Megan Herder displays the mailbox she received at Humboldt High School's graduation. She is joined by uncle Joe Ornelas and aunt Michelle Setter.