By, Leading Knight, Rob Moore

When I think about the Elks lodge my perspective centers on it not as just a building but as a community. Community, a term often used and yet uniquely understood by each individual, holds a special place in my heart. In this conversation, I will share my personal definition of community, shaped by my experiences, values, and beliefs. So let's explore the multifaceted nature of community, highlighting its diverse forms, including geographic, interest-based, cultural, and social networks.

My Personal Definition of Community

For me, community encompasses a sense of belonging, support, and shared purpose. It is a space where individuals come together, transcending differences, to create a nurturing safe environment. My community is not confined to a single definition; instead, it takes shape through various aspects of life, each contributing to my sense of belonging. Community is family.

Geographic Community

One of the most tangible manifestations of community is the geographic one, tied to a specific location. It is the neighborhood where I grew up, the local farmers' market I visit on weekends, and the streets that bear witness to my daily life. In this community, I find a sense of familiarity, knowing that my neighbors share similar experiences and challenges.

Geographic communities are the first spaces where we learn the value of connection and cooperation. Whether it's organizing a neighborhood cleanup or participating in a block party, these shared experiences strengthen our bonds and make us feel like an integral part of something greater than ourselves.

Interest-Based Community

Interest-based communities are a testament to the power of shared passions. These are the groups of people who come together because of a common hobby, interest, or cause. In my life, this includes the softball team I joined, the mountain biking group I'm a part of, and the volunteering activities I engage in.

Interest-based communities provide a sense of fulfillment, as they allow me to connect with people who share my enthusiasm and values. We exchange ideas, inspire one another, and collectively pursue our passions. These communities reinforce the idea that individuals can come together, driven by shared interests, to create something meaningful.

Cultural Community

Cultural communities celebrate heritage and identity. As someone with a multicultural background, my cultural community spans different traditions, languages, and customs. It's the joy of celebrating Native American holidays with my family, the excitement of Lunar New Year festivities, and the warmth of Thanksgiving gatherings.

Cultural communities enrich our lives by allowing us to connect with our roots and learn from one another's experiences. They provide a sense of belonging, especially for those living far from their countries of origin. These communities help us navigate the complexities of identity in an ever diverse world.

Social Network Community

Lastly, social networks are a contemporary form of community, facilitated by technology. These online communities connect people across vast distances, enabling us to forge connections based on shared values, beliefs, or experiences. It's the virtual spaces where I engage in discussions about topics I'm passionate about or support causes I believe in.

Social network communities transcend geographic boundaries, making it possible for individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives to come together. They offer a platform for dialogue, advocacy, and collective action. In this digital age, these communities play an increasingly important role in shaping our sense of belonging.

The Unifying Thread: Connection

While these forms of community may seem disparate, they share a unifying thread—connection. Community, to me, is about forging meaningful connections with others. It's about recognizing our shared humanity, valuing diversity, and working together to create a more inclusive and

compassionate world.

My experiences and values have shaped this definition of community. Through my involvement in geographic, interest-based, cultural, and social network communities, I have come to understand the profound impact that connection and belonging have on our well-being and sense of purpose.

Conclusion

I believe community is a concept that defies a singular definition. It takes shape through a multitude of experiences, values, and perspectives. For me, community is about finding connection and shared purpose in a safe and supportive environment.

As I reflect on my personal definition of community, I am reminded of the immense potential for positive change that lies within these connections. It is through community that we can collectively address challenges, celebrate diversity, and build a more inclusive and compassionate world—one connection at a time.

Call to Action:

How do you define community? What does that look like? Do you share my perspective of the Elks as a community? How can we improve our Elk community?

I would love to hear from you about your perspectives on community. You may send any correspondence to Elks #6 office : Attention of the Leading Knight.