

Committees and Boards

This column is about personal reflections on service to various boards and commission. September 30 will be my last day on the Heritage Education Commission, an organization that hosts a Family History Workshop each year. This year's workshop is on 28 September at Horizon Middle School. After I retired, I was on a high of nine boards or commissions, only one of which had any pay for service. Now I am down to one. Following our Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) presentation to the Clay County commission on our budget for 2020, I reflected on the many groups I served. Forty-four years ago, the HRA of Clay County was created by Clay County to assist in providing affordable housing to Clay County residents. Over the years, HRA has assisted low-income families to obtain quality, safe and affordable housing through a variety of programs funded by Clay County, the State of Minnesota and agencies of the federal government. Two of the programs that I care about the most are those that help children and Veterans. First, along with the State of Minnesota, HRA has a program called Homework Starts at Home. It is designed to provide housing assistance to families with school age children. About 8,700 students experienced homelessness in Minnesota during 2017-2018 school year. Nearly all studies done on child homelessness has found that being homeless while attending school has a very negative affect on performance in school. Homeless children are more likely to be absent, missing more than 10 percent of the school days. Missing school, of course, leads to falling behind on basic skills such as reading. It also has a very negative impact on high school graduation. Other studies also show that high school graduation leads to better success in the job market, getting additional training or education and moving up the employment pay scale. Since the program is rather new, we have not yet seen statistics to show success. However, this past spring four of our participating students successfully graduated from high school.

The second program that HRA supports is ending homelessness for our Veteran population. HRA became a partner with the Fargo VA to end Veteran homelessness and in 2018, Clay County along with West Central Minnesota was declared homelessness free for Veterans. That means that all homeless Veterans needing and wanting housing are in affordable housing. This is a great success. The VA in Fargo which serves 23 counties in northwestern Minnesota and the Veterans Service Office of Clay County have been excellent partners. We work well together.

Looking back over the years, I realized that I had been on over 35 boards, commissions and committees ranging from the MSUM Alumni Association to a two national committees for the VA. I am proud of the work I did and highly recommend this service to anyone, especially the recently retired. You have years of experience that organizations would love to have helping them.