

The enduring experiment that we call “America”

I am going to channel my inner Abraham Lincoln and remind us that two and a half centuries ago, ‘our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal’. What has become known as our “American Experiment” in ordered liberty and self-governance has not always lived up to its founding ideals. We have the scars to prove it: Political hatred, assassinations, even a bloody civil war, all stark reminders to any student of history that citing “E Pluribus Unum” as our national motto does not make it so.

Political disputes are nothing new to our nation. Everyone has an opinion about everything, it seems, and anyone with a keyboard and internet connection can blast their opinion – however uninformed it may be – out to everyone and make it seem as if they had a corner on the truth. We are terribly polarized in America today, with neither “side” trusting people who are of “the other” political party. And yet, America endures.

She endures because, so far, the common vision our forefathers had for a Constitutional Republic has been stronger than our efforts to undermine it. America endures because enough of us are still committed to the ideals of our “shining city on a hill”, while admitting we’ve often failed to live up to them. America endures because enough of us in small towns across Michigan and across the nation, still hold fast to a vision for the common good, even if we disagree on how to achieve it. If you look around at the dignitaries with me today, you’ll notice we have elected leaders from both major political parties who have joined us for today’s commemoration. If they can come together here in Hamburg, Michigan to celebrate our nation’s 250th birthday, surely there is hope for our nation? Our common support for “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” is stronger than our differences.

So when the screaming heads on social media tell you that your political enemy is destroying our nation – take it with a grain of salt. We’ve seen much of this before, and it hasn’t destroyed us yet. Not that we should *not* discuss the issues that divide us, but let’s keep discussing them instead of just shouting down our opponents.

Let us here, today, recommit ourselves to continue building our small-town American community right here where we live. This is where most of our lives take place – not Washington DC or Lansing, which is where everybody wants us to focus. How about we all channel our energy and enthusiasm into working to make Hamburg Township better? Those of us who are involved and engaged in this community know that volunteerism is way down. When people complain about rising taxes, it’s a frustrating reality to point out that we NEED to tax and spend to do certain things that members of a community once pitched in to do together.

Hamburg Township is fantastic, but think of how much better we could be if everyone – ALL OF US – would give just a few hours of our precious time to our community. Let’s step back from the Facebook arguments, get off X and Bluesky for a while, and engage with our actual neighbors instead. Maybe volunteer for our upcoming Huron River Cleanup Day, or for your church. Stop and pick up the trash you see alongside the road, offer to return someone else’s shopping cart to the rack at Kroger. Buy a meal for someone at a local restaurant. Because when the crises of life come – and they come to us all – it will be the friends we’ve made and the neighbors we’ve served who will be our help and consolation.

I love Hamburg Township, and the reasons WHY we are the safest community of our size in the entire state. Let’s continue to prioritize our community and keep this wonderful day-to-day, small town American lifestyle going. We’re in this together – and THAT is why America endures.