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People rank high among resources

Leaders urged to hold onto the past while embracing change

By BRANDY EMILY

People are a community's most vital natural resource as they look toward the future.

That was the message offered Thursday by Sylvia Lovely during the Leadership Jackson County Distinguished Speakers luncheon at The Seymour Elks Lodge.

"Our agenda is to get people to unite," Lovely told about 70 people gathered for the meeting.

Lovely said by the year 2050, an estimated 25 percent of the American population will live in eight "super cities" across the United States. She said an issue in those super cities is that quality of life is beginning to suffer, making smaller communities such as Seymour a more appealing place to live.

Encouraging leaders to embrace the new and different but still hold onto the old and familiar when deciding what to do with a town, Lovely told leaders to help the town find its niche to appeal to people, especially younger generations.

"What we really want to get through is that action is local," Lovely said.

Lovely said Seymour appears to be doing well in areas of growth, stability and diversity and that those are three areas that can be built upon.

Broadband development was a key point shared by Lovely. She said this development would eliminate geographic distance as an obstacle as well as reduce the time it takes to access information. Lovely also shared examples of how working with development groups can benefit a community in order for big businesses to co-exist with small communities.

Lovely shared memories of her childhood, including her experiences growing up in Kentucky and her parents living on only eighth-grade educations at best. She said her parents were failed by the state of Kentucky and moved to Dayton, Ohio, where her father worked until the 1970s at National Cash Register. They later moved to Lexington to help raise Lovely's two sons.

"They were the pioneers of the live anywhere, work anywhere generation," Lovely said about her parents.

Communities have changed since the days her parents moved around, Lovely said. She said citizenship has changed because of technology, mobility and quality of life.

Seymour resident Jana Plump agreed with Lovely's book, "The Little Blue Book of Big Ideas."

"I just thought it (the book) had ideas that all communities can take ideas from," Plump said.

Lovely is the president of NewCities Foundation, which encourages residents to help make their



communities thrive. She is also the executive director and CEO of the Kentucky League of Cities.