

A community of people helping people

To gain perspective about the virtues of living in a small town, you need to have your car unexpectedly break down.

That's exactly what happened to new Heidelberg College Board of Trustees member and alumnus Paul Brown, who traveled to campus from Atlanta for a series of meetings earlier this year.

This story has a happy ending. Tiffin Ford's Dan Reineke came to the rescue - indeed, going above and beyond - to assist Paul Brown with car repairs and a vehicle to borrow in the interim. Dan's special attention was appreciated, but it wasn't surprising, because it wasn't the first time a local business or individual has sprung to action when a friend or stranger needed help.

The bottom line is that ours is a community of people helping people.

As a college and a business partner in Tiffin, I can tell you that Heidelberg College is fortunate to be the beneficiary of these types of special relationships that occur on a regular basis. My family and I have lived in both large cities and small towns; these extraordinary stories are unique to towns like ours.

Heidelberg faculty and staff members frequently pull into Hank's BP station and have a conversation with the mechanic, who addresses them by their first name. They trust that the service they receive will be completed on time, done skillfully and courteously, because it's always been that way.

At Heidelberg, we host numerous events each year, large and small, on and off campus. We rely on business partners like Wagner's Floral Co. to make our venues look attractive, and they rise to the occasion often with a minute's notice. We don't hesitate to invite our alumni or special guests to dinner at our local restaurants such as Carmella's, where we - and they - are treated like good friends.

Indeed, we have friends around every corner. Local realtor Marcie Funkhouser has, on more than one occasion, gone the extra mile to help employees new to town find suitable housing. Viewpoint Graphics works with our student organizations to print T-shirts for their various projects. On many occasions, Crystal Traditions has designed a beautiful glass piece, or the gals at Glory Bee help us find just the perfect gift. Weekly, our maintenance staff makes the quick jaunt to Tiffin Hardware, and they come back with just what they need.

For each of these examples, there are countless more that contribute to the "hometown feel" of our community.

Why are these symbiotic relationships so valuable? Because both parties take the time to get to know one another. We meet each other at church, at our kids' school functions, at

Wal-Mart. We're members of civic or service organizations and we volunteer side by side for community organizations.

These relationships are the heartbeat of our community. They are reassuring to those of us who live here and they project a welcoming tone to those who visit our small town.

While Heidelberg College is one of the largest employers in Seneca County, the benefits we derive from our partnerships with other local businesses, both large and small, are vital to the success we have in achieving our mission. We are committed to utilizing local vendors as often as possible, and this commitment is returned a hundredfold, not only in business relationships but personal friendships.

When we help each other, we build a stronger community - a unique community where we value and serve each other.

That's the bottom line.