



Choosing Community Over Division: A Call to Build Connection and Belonging

Across our country, across generations, people are lonelier than ever. Many struggle to feel seen, valued, and connected. Instead of community, they are too often pulled into tribes—groups defined by who agrees with them, who looks like them, or who thinks like them.

That tribalism is everywhere. It exists in society and in our institutions, and, if we are honest, in Ruritan as well. Acknowledging this does not mean we have failed. It means we are human—and it reminds us why our mission matters.

Recent conversations in the national spotlight have shown how people retreat behind labels and boundaries meant to protect themselves. Unfortunately, instead of healing, this often leads to deeper isolation. People do not need more sides to choose from. They do not need more labels or tribes. What they need is community.

Strong communities are built when very different people choose to work together toward something larger than themselves. Unity does not mean agreement on everything, nor does it mean sameness. It means commitment—to one another and to a shared purpose. When divisions slow us down, we lose momentum. In a fractured world, momentum matters.

When people feel disconnected, they stop engaging. They stop volunteering. They stop believing they matter. Ruritan must stand in direct opposition to that trend. We must bring people together. We must give them a reason to show up. We must create places where people belong. But we cannot do that if we turn inward or allow differences to create distance.

This is why growth matters. Our goal for the coming year is for each district to open three new clubs. Three new clubs will not solve loneliness or erase tribalism, but they will make a difference. We do not open new clubs for the sake of numbers. We open them so future generations will have places to connect, opportunities to serve, and communities where they are not alone. Every new club is a door opened and an invitation to belong.

Our vision—*Creating Thriving Communities*—does not happen by accident. Thriving communities are built intentionally and together. That requires choosing collaboration over division, listening before reacting, and remembering that purpose matters more than preference. If Ruritan cannot model healthy community, then who will?

This is our moment to surge forward—with intentionality. Surging forward means recommitting to our mission, opening new clubs where community is missing, choosing unity over tribalism, and believing that what we do truly matters.

People are searching for connection, purpose, and belonging. Let Ruritan be that place, so communities today and tomorrow can truly thrive.