

# First Impressions

## *Community Program Survey Results*

Compiled Nov. 5, 2003



**First Impressions**  
***Team Profile***  
***Village of Woodsfield, Ohio***  
***visiting***  
***Village of Salem, West Virginia***

***Date of Visit*** October 2, 2003

***Sponsoring Organization*** Woodsfield Village Council  
Ohio State University Extension

***Team Members*** Carol Hehr  
Glenn Ayers  
Pauline Delbrugge  
Doris Latimer

***Team Coordinator*** Mark Landefeld  
OSU Extension, Monroe County

***Time of Visit*** Arrival Time: 9:50 a.m.  
Departure Time: 2:00 p.m.

***Weather*** Warm, Sunny, Beautiful October Day

***General Summary*** Our team felt there were many positive characteristics in both villages. Team members repeatedly savored the small town atmosphere evident in the community. We were impressed with the friendliness and helpful attitude of the residents and workers.

As you approach the community.....

I. What was my perception before visiting? What did I expect?

R Small college town with shops, bookstores, etc. with young people going to and fro. Lots of activity.

R Expected a small town with many of the same attributes and problems found in Woodsfield. Expected a rural town with decreasing population and finances striving to provide necessary services and attracting new businesses and industry. Expected somewhat of a college atmosphere in the town.

R A rural area, curved roads, beautiful college town.

II. The "five minute" impression:

*Take one drive through the community without stopping. As you exit the community, pull over to the side of the road and write down what you felt about the town with only this quick look. Do this in silence, don't talk with the others in your group for this part.*

- o Not as nice as I expected. Run down lanes and weeds along the main road.

As you visit "around town:

*You now divide into your teams: one team will drive the town while the other members will hoof it and start visiting businesses, city hall, etc. After lunch the teams will switch roles so everyone has a chance to drive the community and to personally walk into stores and visit with people.*

III. Driving Tour Questions:

...evaluate EACH entrance.

*Go about 1/2 - 1 mile out each road and return. List each road (61 North, etc.) And list positive and negatives for each.*

R Old Route 50 –Sewage Plant –weeds. Also weeds along road coming in. Wall needs repaired. Some nice homes, well kept. Some dilapidated homes.

Route 29 –well kept –no signage.

Route 23 S –Good signage –well kept homes and lawns. Locust street –narrow road.

R Noticed there were few signs noting the route number and names of such roads as Patterson Road (Rt. 29), Rt. 23, etc. Each road was narrow and in need of some

resurfacing.

R Route 50 upkeep was not too good. School needs more land, space, playground. Route 29 –houses too close, road too narrow. Many beautiful old brick buildings need updated, new facades. Interesting sandstone walls around the area.

1. (a) Driving...comments on business: evaluate the downtown business area:  
(Signs, appearance, size, etc.)

R More hometown shopping needed. Need more trees.

R The downtown business area showed that many businesses had been closed. There were other businesses near the main street such as a day care, an optometrist, and IGA, a hardwood moulding company, a Dollar General, etc. It appeared none of these businesses employed many people.

1. (b) Driving...evaluate other business areas.

R Care Center –well maintained. Need more local restaurants. No fast food places such as Wendy's, Arby's, McDonald's.

R As we drove about ½ mile in opposite directions of Main Street, we saw Salem College, the Sunbridge Care & Rehab Center and the Industrial Home for Youth. These are apparently the three largest employers in the area, and it would seem that they provide the bulk of employment for the people in the area.

2. Driving...comments on residential:

R Some very nice houses, but more unkept houses than I expected.

R Nice older homes, mostly maintained very well.

R There were certain residential sections away from Route 50 where homes seemed to be clean and well kept, while others nearer the main street were in need of refurbishing. This would probably be true in most towns. Their village government officials indicated that they were trying to deal with these dilapidated buildings.

3. Driving...comments on:

*a. street signs*

- R It seemed like there needed to be more street signs as we sometimes didn't know what routes or streets we were traveling.
- R Adequate.
- R Adequate for directions, but rather primitive.

*b. traffic patterns/street conditions*

- R Side streets not maintained.
- R Traffic seemed to flow well.
- R Traffic basically was two-way. Streets were narrow and in need of repaving as there were some potholes and crumbling concrete.

*c. welcome signs (at entrances)*

- R Adequate.
- R There were welcome signs at each end of the town.
- R No mention of Salem College, size, 4 year college commuter school or on-campus housing with directions to. Main brick building in center of town with arch needs updated and made more visible.

*d. direction signs to parks, schools, hospitals/clinics, attractions, services (i.e. police), etc.*

- R Had to ask where city building and police station was located. Sign for youth corrections center was visible. The college was hidden –no signage except for the stone. Need to promote college when entering town.
- R There's a need for more signage to locate such places as city government, parks, police, etc. There was no visible, large sign indicating the entrance to Salem College. One sign still indicated that the Industrial School for Girls was located here, but this school has been renamed the Industrial Home for Youth. It has not been a girls facility for a number of years.
- R Received info in regards to police station and Apple Butter Festival from people on the street. Chief of Police was very helpful and informative in regards to other village offices,

etc.

4. Driving...comments on industrial park/area: Sign well defined...busy...growing...new...etc.

R Did not see signs.

R There was no industrial park area that we encountered. There seemed to be growth at the Industrial School as a new addition has been added, but the enrollment at Salem College has decreased from approx. 1000 to 360 students.

5. Driving...comments on schools:

R School buildings in area in good shape. Too close to residents, not much playground equipment.

R Elementary schools –old buildings –very close to road. Middle school very nice.

R Van Horn and Harden Elementary schools both seemed to be older structures with limited playground space. A new middle school was also seen, but there seemed to be no outside athletic/gym areas or practice fields.

6. Driving...comments on parks, play grounds, athletic facilities, etc:

R These facilities seemed to be well kept.

R There was a city park with playground and equipment. A very nice soccer field was also seen which probably is used by Salem College students.

7. Driving...comments on other:

*a. hospitals/clinics*

R Did not see any hospitals or clinics.

*b. billboards/advertising*

R Didn't see many billboards.

R Seems to be a need for more billboards and advertising signs.

*c. Other (no comments)*

#### IV. Walking Tour Questions:

1. Walking around...comments on businesses (physical part): Appearance, displays, signs, etc.

R The flower shop on the main street really stands out –very nice display in front. The other businesses did not impress me.

R There were a few smaller businesses along old Route 50, but it seemed that an increasing number of businesses had closed as indicated by empty buildings.

2. Walking around...comments on people: Were they friendly, did they know answers to questions, did they try to help, appearance, etc.

R Clerk at city building was very friendly and a good source of information on many activities within the town. Council chamber very up-to-date with speakers and seating arrangement was good.

R We basically visited and spent the most time at the city building and the police department. All the people we talked to were very friendly and helpful. They answered all our questions and offered to help us with locations. The police headquarters was an old building that needed to be cleaned.

R People seemed to be very friendly. Asked two people where the Chamber of Commerce office was located and they didn't know. Clerk of village was nice and helpful.

3. Community information: comments on.....

*a. community brochure (tourist type)*

- R Brochure and village newsletter was very nice and helpful.
- R Ample tourist-type bulletins available including those advertising the Apple Butter Festival, the city of Salem, the Sam Warner 5K Run and the Fort New Salem Historical Village.
- R Town Talk given to us by village clerk was very good! Placemats in restaurant very informative –good idea.

*b. business/attractions brochures or directory*

- R Brochure –very nice.
- R While eating lunch we noticed that each table had a placemat advertising upcoming events such as the Apple Butter Festival, Salem College Homecoming and the Fort New Salem Harvest Gathering.

*c. community profile (demographic, industrial type information for prospective business people, etc.*

- R The city building had a three-page pamphlet called Town Talk which gave much information of what was happening in the town and area. We did not notice any book/pamphlet for attracting prospective businesses.

*d. map*

- R There were city maps available in the city building.

*e. other (i.e. bulletin/notice tourism, kiosks, etc.)*

- R The Fort New Salem Historical Site had a number of tourist pamphlets available.

4. City Hall ...describe your visit:

*a. appearance of facility, including signing*

- R Hard to find police station and when we found the building there were no signs to indicate where the office was located inside the building.

R The City Hall was relatively small with a sign in the window. There were not many chairs in evidence for those attending council meetings.

*b. helpfulness of staff*

R Police Chief and Village Clerk were very helpful.

R The village clerk was very helpful and personable. She answered all of our questions.

*c. other*

*(no comments)*

5. Chamber of Commerce...describe your visit:

*a. did people know where it was (or who to refer you to)?*

R Could not find Chamber of Commerce –asked several people and they didn't know where it was located.

R The police chief referred us to the village council chambers to ask them where the Chamber of Commerce was located.

*b. comment on information available*

*(no comment)*

*c. comment of staff*

*(no comment)*

*d. other (hours, appearance, locations, etc.)*

*(no comment)*

6. Other stuff .....

*a. public restrooms (available, condition, etc.)*

R The public restroom we visited needed to be cleaned.

R Stopped at gas station –restroom was not very nice.

*b. pay phones (working, phonebook intact, etc.)*

R Really didn't see any pay phones.

R We did not notice any pay phones.

*c. parking*

R Adequate.

R Parking was mostly along main street with no parking meters seen. It seemed adequate.

V. WRAP UP

A. Using your senses ...?

*1. What does the community TASTE like? (Specialty bakery/restaurant, etc.)*

R Restaurant –good food.

R The main restaurant in town (The Cottage Corner) had excellent food and the service was very good.

R Only one restaurant, very good food, service was good. Nice, friendly atmosphere.

*2. What does the community SMELL like?*

- o Festival foods.
- o Since there were no major industries that might possibly pollute the air, there was a clean smell. We did not notice any foul odors although the sewage disposal plant was near the main part of town.

*3. What SOUNDS did you hear?*

- Quiet town –not much traffic or people on the streets.
- We heard the sounds of the Apple Butter Festival going on as well as the typical sounds of a small community.

4. *What did the community feel like (emotional response, i.e. cold/warm, crowded/deserted, inviting, etc., or physical response, i.e. rough streets, etc.)?*

- Warm, receptive, friendly atmosphere.

B. List the 5 most positive things you observed about the community:

1. Fall displays along main street. / Friendly and helpful people.
2. New middle school. / A local government trying to meet the needs of its citizens.
3. Festival to bring in tourists. / Festivals and historical sites to attract tourists.
4. Nestled in the hills. / Community working to promote its assets.
5. Historic village. / Pictures of local military men and women serving our country.

C. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours:

- Placemats in restaurant listed events and schedule. Will take back and suggest to Chamber of Commerce.
- We would benefit by having a city manager in Woodsfield.
- I liked the idea of having placemats in restaurants listing the events and attractions that the town has to offer. I would ask our Economic Development dept. to come up with such a placemat.

D. What will you remember most about the community six months from now?

- I will remember my first impression, unkept houses and weeds.
- The friendly and helpful nature of the people of Salem.

E. Other comments (that just didn't seem to fit anywhere else!)

- I believe that research should be attempted as to why Salem College is losing enrollment

so quickly. If enrollment could be increased, the economy in the town would benefit in many ways including restaurants, rental housing, etc.