

A Wolf at the Door - an Interview with Frank Peczuh

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Peczuh, local business owner, served as a USU Trustee seven years.

There are different types of crisis. Some walk up and slap us in the face. They draw media vans from all over the country, these times are shocking and horrific. Other emergencies come along gradually, creeping up, with as much danger, but without any pageantry. Frank Peczuh feels that Carbon and Emery counties are in a silent crisis that is just as serious as a dramatic catastrophe. Why is he an expert? As a member of USU's Board of Trustees the past seven years, he has spent fair amount of time thinking and studying the local economy and future of the university in our area.

"We need to act as if the wolf is at the door, because it is. We have this amazing ability to unite quickly when there is a disaster or flood. We need to do it now," Peczuh said.

His fears stem from the quiet shift happening gradually in the local economy. Like a landslide, it is gaining momentum and clearing a wide path. His argument that Castle Country is in perilous times as a community affirms that seasons of transitions are dangerous.

What is this abstract danger looming over the area? Economic change. "We have the opportunity to address and fix our economic crisis, or we can slowly spiral downward into a ghost town," Peczuh added.

Clamoring for Growth

With great local clamoring over reductions, budget cuts and decreased revenues, Peczuh understands the risk, "our local government's structures could crumble under their own weight." Instead of pointing fingers or feeling angry, he is focused on the essentials of the problem: creating growth is a necessity.

It's not all doom and gloom. Peczuh has great hope for the future as, "we change Price from a coal mining town into a college town. When people think of Ephraim, they think of Snow College. It is a 'college town.' When they think of Price, USUE doesn't come to mind. We need to make the university part of our town's identity," he said.

His argument is that as time passes, and things change around us (coal and energy production), Utah State University Eastern can provide a constant pillar of support. Even though the university is not perfect, it will become better as the community rallies and embraces it.

This process of reflection about the economy started years ago when a client from Salt Lake City called Peczuh on a Friday afternoon. When a client telephones Peczuh Printing with concerns late in the day at the end of the week, Peczuh braces himself for an emergency.

He was surprised when the client asked, "Why do you stay in a rural community? It just doesn't make sense."

The replies came to Peczuh's mind: This is my home, it's where my roots are, I want to raise my children here and this is a great place to live, why would I leave here? Citizens feel comfortable working across cultures, religions and belief systems in this community and Peczuh could not see himself leaving it.

An Economic Engine

Stackable credits are the most exciting development Peczuh points to at the college. What do credits have to do with fixing the economy? They produce flexibility and a qualified workforce.

"We need to develop entrepreneurs who provide an economic engine for the community. Students can get a four-year degree, certificates and training to enter the

workforce. It is exciting to see students flow into the technical, truck driving and business fields with the skills they learn at USUE," he said.

It's not about money, it's about people.

The "why" for his concerns is not profits; he wants to alleviate the suffering caused by poverty.

"The best way to lift our people is to bring growth and stability to our region, it makes people's lives better," he said.

Growing up in a family where business and homelife were intermingled, Peczuh takes counsel from his father's success model. He taught his children that if they did all that they could, God would provide for them. He was very careful to do his "part."

"It is an understatement to call him financially and morally conservative. He never danced close to the line he felt divided right and wrong. It has served us so well as a family," Peczuh said.

Watching his father strictly follow his internal principles, created a business and community leader who is not afraid to express his conscience. From him comes the call, it is time to unite as a community... just as we do when there is a disaster. It is time for heroic efforts to create a strong, vibrant economy. It will take everyone, especially the university.

~ *Renee Banasky*