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Nebraska Strong - Social Capital in Action

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Cornhusker Economics

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Market Report	Year Ago	4 Wks Ago	4-16-19
Livestock and Products.			
Weekly Average			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	115	*	*
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	183.16	179.33	183.34
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	146.31	151.36	155.53
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	217.41	224.94	228.72
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated	46.26	48.42	77.57
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass 51-52% Lean.	67.76	62.87	83.44
Slaughter Lambs, woolled and shorn, 135-165 lb. National.	145.73	141.07	151.43
National Carcass Lamb Cutout FOB.	373.73	372.16	378.38
Crops.			
Daily Spot Prices			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	4.57	3.83	4.02
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Columbus, bu.	3.65	3.41	3.51
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Columbus, bu.	9.65	7.84	7.97
Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	5.91	5.29	5.50
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, Mn, bu.	2.74	3.11	3.21
Feed			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	*	175	170
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	97.50	105	112.50
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	*	92.50	90
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture Nebraska Average.	160	145.50	148
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture Nebraska Average.	51.50	50	47.50
* No Market			

We have heard it and we have witnessed it in action. *Nebraska Strong* has been a unifying message that is bringing Nebraskans, friends and family together from across the nation. Signifying strength, determination, and a resolve to rebuild, *Nebraska Strong* has bolstered communities and individuals who have, in some cases, lost all semblance of what they had prior to the disastrous March blizzard and floods. Through this simple message, individuals have begun to utilize their social group networks or social capital to support recovery efforts.

Through the study of communities that have experienced major disasters, researchers found the existence of strong community social capital helps to foster early and more successful disaster recovery. To fully understand the import of social capital in disaster recovery, we must first define social capital and the application of the three different types of social capital in communities.

What is Social Capital?

Social capital is simply defined as the connections between people and organizations, and is often displayed through mutual trust, well-defined information networks, and effective social norms (Chamlee-Wright and Storr, 2011). Within the social capital framework there are three different types of connections:

- *Bonding* describes the close connections between individuals (i.e., family and friends) that helps to build community cohesion, builds social supports, and provides personal assistance, especially in times of need.
- *Bridging* describes the loose connections between individuals that span differences such as class or race. Individuals create bridging capital through associations, civic and community organizations.
- Lastly, *linking* social capital describes the connections between community members with outside resources, interacting with formal or institutionalized resources (Aldrich and Meyer, 2015).

Together the three types of social capital provide access to resources that help address individual and community needs.

Social Capital and Disaster Recovery

How has social capital helped communities with disaster recovery? Studying the after effects of the 1995 Japan and 2001 India earthquakes, Nakagawa and Shaw (2004) found that communities with high levels of social capital were more efficient in recovery and tended to be happier with post-disaster planning processes. The authors attribute the higher levels of satisfaction with collective decision-making, trust in local leadership and large number of networks (bridging and linking). Mutual trust and dependence (bonding) help with the community's ability to adapt and with participatory decision making that led to more effective disaster management and volunteer opportunities (Aldrich and Meyer, 2014). Bonding also influences the likelihood of individuals returning and rebuilding. After Hurricane Katrina, individuals' decisions to return were dependent, in part, on whether family members, neighbors or others in their social networks also returned, without bonding, individuals may find it easier to live in other places rather than face the daunting task of

rebuilding.

Bridging social capital can also enhance the speed of community recovery. Organizations aggregate community resources to support individuals and families during immediate recovery but also access outside resources, provide important communication channels, and take on new roles for community betterment, including fostering a positive collective narrative for post-disaster recovery. Storr and Haeffele-Balch (2012) found that bridging social capital is especially important in more diverse communities as it can assist with language barriers, create opportunities for sharing skills, and direct local resources. In contrast, communities with little bridging social capital were less effective in their recovery.

The ability of individuals to exercise their social networks and support systems may be relative to the level of community loss. In areas where the majority of individuals are displaced or experience loss, the number of people able to provide reciprocal sharing is also reduced. Major loss communities may also experience a reduction in individuals' capacity to attend public meetings and socialize with neighbors. Aldrich and Meyer (2015) further note that strong bonding can be used to resist recovery efforts, especially if decisions are made without citizen input and the affected individuals feel decisions are not in their collective best interests.

Overall, social capital can play a very important role in a community recovery process. Through participatory discussions, individuals can develop a collective narrative that helps to drive the recovery process. These shared discussions help communities make sense of their circumstances, assess their capacity for recovery, decide on a course of action and determine needs. The strategies communities adopt will depend on their resources, expectations and the collective narrative (Chamlee-Wright and Storr, 2011).

Using Social Capital in Community Recovery

How does a community use social capital to help in the recovery process? Aldrich and Meyer (2015) provide a few recommendations gleaned from prior disaster situations:

- Increase trust and social cohesion through moderator-led focus groups to gather citizen input on rebuilding efforts, especially in areas of potentially controversial subjects such as schools and resource usage.
- Create opportunities for social events, open public spaces for social interaction and conversations. Celebrate minor and major accomplishments and support continued needs.
- Adopt community volunteering projects that bring people together and foster rebuilding efforts. For example, time banking and community currency creates incentives and rewards for individuals who volunteer in rebuilding. Their labor is exchanged for “dollars” to be spent at local businesses.
- Utilize outside expertise to engage community and organizational leaders in recovery discussions. As rebuilding decisions are considered, seek outside technical expertise to help solidify decisions and actions.
- Purposefully plan to enhance community social capital through community layout and building design. Creating opportunities that build social capital will enhance community resiliency.

Nebraska Strong is social capital in action. Through bonding, bridging and linking beyond our state line, Nebraskans have activated the fabric that allows individuals and communities to recover and rebuild. Through purposeful dialogue, interactions and planning communities can continue to foster these connections and create better, more resilient environments to support today and tomorrow’s citizens.

Sources:

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- Chamlee-Wright, E. & Storr, V.H. (2011). Social capital as collective narratives and post-disaster community recovery, *The Sociological Review*, 59:2, 266-282.
- Nakagawa, U. & Shaw, R. (2004). Social capital: A missing link to disaster recovery, *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 22, 5-34.
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