

## **The Website that Generates More than Information, It Creates Possibilities**

[www.FrederickSD.com](http://www.FrederickSD.com)

Vidushi helped make a website for a small community possible. The website created with Internet Consultant Krysti Mikkonen for the community of Frederick, SD and the production expertise and help of Vidushi has made a significant impact on the small community of 250 people and has proven to be much more than a website. This site has been a light into the past, a key for today, an inspiration for tomorrow, and reflection of what will be. The website has been an invaluable tool for communication, reflection, information and dissemination to and from area residents and those so far away.

While residents wanted a website, there was no budget for the site. The town, being so small, didn't have the money and there wasn't another organization with the funds to make a site happen. Krysti submitted a plea to Vidushi explaining the community needed a website, but didn't have the funds to make it happen. They heard and understood the plea and gave a significant discount on a comprehensive site. Donations were sought from area residents for some of the funding and Vidushi covered what couldn't be raised.

The site was launched to much fanfare and praise. The site began as a tool to post news to area residents since there is no local newspaper that services the area. Residents had previously received via email, as an attachment, a weekly "E-news" in MS Word format. During the school year, students from the Frederick High School journalism classes submit news stories from the school and community about sports and local events via email to Ms. Mikkonen. For two years she reformatted the student's submissions, created the news and emailed it to residents at no charge, however those that didn't have MS Word could not access the news. Once the site was created she would post the news on the news page of the site and email site registrants that the updated news was now posted on the site with a link to the site. During the summer, without the journalism students, the news is updated about every two weeks with general information about the area's events, again through time and efforts donated by IC Krysti Mikkonen.

The site was extremely valuable for 2007 since Frederick had their 125<sup>th</sup> celebration and the school hosted an All-School reunion in July. Providing up-to-date news and information in a quick and efficient manner can sometimes be laborious and expensive, but with the website, people knew where to look and the information was available quickly and easily through the website. Many residents praised the site and were grateful to have a connection to home that could be accessed quickly and easily.

While the site was great for promoting this summer's events, it also provides a connection to home for those that are so far away. A pastor and former resident of Frederick wrote to say, "I've been blessed to serve as a pastor all over the country and have been privileged to go on a sabbatical around the world... yet Frederick is the home I tell people about. Thank you for bringing Frederick into my living space." Another former resident working overseas wrote to say, "An excellent web site that provides

comprehensive information on Frederick. Keep up the good work. Nice to be able to access this information while I am living in South Eastern Europe.”

The site has allowed Frederick to puff out its chest a bit and begin to dream, think a little bigger and recognize that they are not confined to a destiny of becoming another small town that dwindles and fades away. It began with the e-news and the website. In the last seven months the community began to participate in an economic development program designed to promote growth and diminish poverty. The young people, many of who wrote articles for the Frederick E-news developed the idea of raising money to purchase an inflatable movie theater. This theater would be promoted on the website, by going to the website area residents can vote for the movie they'd like to see next on the site and all money raised through sponsorship advertising, rental of the system and concessions from each showing could go towards other economic development ideas in the community. They showed their first family movie, “Barnyard” on August 5, 2007 on a 20 foot inflatable frame and screen in Simmons Park, which was recently cleaned up and refreshed by community volunteers.

Other small towns in the area are also taking note of the website. A young man serving in the Air Force originally from a neighboring South Dakota community wrote to say, “Too many nice, quiet SD towns are dwindling in population simply because there's nothing to do, nothing to interest people in hanging around, hats off to you for trying to turn that trend around!” He found our site from an article in the third largest newspaper in South Dakota, the American News in Aberdeen, SD. Another resident from a small town in the state added, “Appreciate your effort. Small towns are hard to beat.”

Without the help and understanding of Vidushi this website may not have happened. The area residents of Frederick, SD have benefited immensely from the development of this site. This website is not just any website. It has been a light to see into the past, a key to seeing what the community is about today, an inspiration for improving the future and a reflection of the community yet to be and it has truly made a difference.

Thank you Vidushi!