

*Project #1: We Are Ripon California*

1. My ideas came together over time and I finally decided to set out in creating a photo mosaic. One thing I hear especially frequently in the board member position is that as the city of Ripon grows, we are losing the small town feel. As I will soon be leaving to pursue college interests in another location, I saw the opportunity to give back one last time to the place where I grew up for nearly half of my life. This mosaic was to collect pictures and optional descriptions that capture the special impact that individuals/groups/businesses enact within our community. We each play a special role in making Ripon special so making a physical representation of that would be the way to preserve it. I intended to proof all submitted pictures, turn it into a photo mosaic through computer software, and then print/frame it to be delivered to town hall. The photo mosaic would have a picture of Ripon and the words “We are Ripon” but would be created out of approximately 300 smaller pictures. For pictures that included descriptions, I would possibly create a social media page that would highlight these photos individually. An alternative in the event that I didn’t collect enough pictures would be to create a photo album and include the descriptions along with photos there.
2. I began by creating a canva flier and corresponding google form for the project publicity. The google form was double checked by Morty for appropriateness and technical issues so it would be perfect to push out. On the first Saturday of the month, I spent a full day (9 hours) visiting from door to door on the West side of Ripon giving out a small flyer. I received largely positive feedback from people who appeared intrigued by the creativity of this project. I later created a Facebook post in the Ripon, California group that got engagement from several people. I then spent part of a second day visiting businesses along Main Street, around the new Luxe Apartments, and then near Save Mart. I had a larger flier that they could both review and display in their windows. Many businesses had odd hours so I ended up reaching out and getting in contact with them through Instagram. I also put the flier on my Instagram story for all to see. At this point, I got a call from Ms. Stephanie Hobbs who informed me that she had started a nonprofit that shared the same name as my project. We got to exchange some ideas between one another and eventually decided that it would be better to distinguish my project from her organization in some way. That is when I made an edit to the description and clarified that it was a “student project”. Before spring break, I had an email sent to all students and staff at the school with an attached flier. More recently, I connected with Carrie who runs the Greet Ripon (previously Discover Ripon) magazine. She was excited because my project shares the same mission as her organization of telling the stories in our community. She was therefore very eager to collaborate with me and we met over coffee.

3. Carrie sent me on a lead for an interesting story involving an elderly gentleman (in his 80s) who was reunited with his old 2nd grade teacher (in her 90s) and also a couple of his classmates. This group of people reunited when the 2nd grade teacher recognized him being featured in another story of the Discover Ripon magazine. Long ago when there was a teachers' shortage, the woman had left high school in Michigan at 16 and gotten a teaching credential with a 2 year college program. Upon finishing, she moved to Ripon and taught 2nd grade at RC. The older gentleman had changed schools from RC to Ripon High for high school because he had a strong desire to play football and at the time RC didn't have a stadium. There is so much history behind this story because the man has lived in Ripon his entire life. I very much intend to meet with him and the rest of the group at one of their weekly card games when I get a chance. For the picture mosaic, I was only able to gather four pictures through the google form and three of them were students. However, Carrie said that she has thousands of pictures from years in the community that she can forward to me. Therefore, we still intend to put that mosaic together but we are extending the project's timeline a bit. In addition to framing the mosaic and offering it to the city, Carrie would also like for the piece to be featured in the February edition of the Greet Ripon magazine to honor their 5-year anniversary. I am excited to continue this project alongside her and see what we can create!

This project was a very enjoyable learning experience for me. I took a risk by taking on a project at such a grand scale. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to encourage others in sharing their stories. This project is a work-in-progress and I look forward to seeing what becomes of it as I continue navigating the time up until I shall embark to college. This project is meaningful to me because it is important to give back to a community that has given so much to me.