

Dear Rural Neighbor,

When was the last time you thought about why you like to live in the country? Are you and your neighbors taking full advantage of the benefits? Are you nurturing what's important and protecting against what damages? Are you going through life on purpose or asleep? Have you ever arrived home with no memory of the journey? No red lights, left turns or free way off ramps anywhere in your conscious mind; yet there you are parked in your garage, door slowly descending behind you, 25 miles from work... It's a little scary, but all too familiar.

Life is unlive on auto pilot; doing the things you're supposed to do to accomplish the results you're supposed to accomplish so you will have the life you're supposed to want. But who says what kind of life you *really* want? Have you asked yourself recently? It's a challenging question, usually ignored. If you don't ask yourself what is really important, you will just get what you get. Living life on purpose is a lot of work but it produces more satisfying results.

Some of us remember and some of us imagine what it was like in the old days. People were more responsible for their own lives and took care of one another. Small towns were safe, sidewalks and store fronts were places to visit and catch up. Hard work and challenges made us strong. The young learned from the old and we were proud of our town. At Darby Rural, we call *that* Rural Life. People want that kind of community and all over Clark County folks are returning to rural life values. We want you to share in that movement with us. We want to create a community where you and your neighbors:

- **Build fences you can see through**
- **Leave your garage doors up**
- **Read your paper by the mailbox**
- **Watch sunrises instead of television**
- **Use the chairs on your front porch**
- **Share tools and elbow grease**
- **Listen carefully to kids and "old" people**
- **Send your children off on their bikes**
- **Participate in community events**
- **Take ownership in your towns health**

It takes mindful effort to bring about the community attitude that breathes life into these rural life examples. That effort is generated by many influences. Darby Rural is one of those influences. We would like to partner with you in this effort.

The Rural Life essay contest is an attempt to wake each other up and raise rural life awareness. We want you to think about why you like living in the country. We believe that if we are conscious about who we are, we will both enjoy it more and work to foster and protect it.

The contest is simple. Children (no age limit) answer the question "Why do you like to live in the country?" One page essays are due by September 30th. Submissions will be read by folks from Darby Rural and posted on the web site. Ten winning essay writers from each town in Clark County (100 total) will receive a bus stop that will be installed at the end of their driveway. Bus stops will be provided by Darby Rural and will have the web address and an admonition to "Live your rural life!" on the street facing sides.

Who: Community dedicated organizations, kids, parents, community members in Clark County

What: Essay Contest - Why do you like to live in the country?

Where: Clark County communities (Washougal, Camas, Vancouver, Ridgefield, Battle Ground, Brush Prairie, Yacolt, Amboy, La Center and Woodland)

When: From now until September 30th

Why: To promote Rural Life awareness and intentional community involvement based on Rural Values.

www.rurallifeyourway.com

"Rural values are being threatened by pursuit of comfort and reliance on municipal support. People are losing their identity as part of a community and becoming more and more isolated, (while) relying on a nameless system to reduce their need for independence and personal responsibility. The true experience of real life is rural life." - Alan Darby