



Medora

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Using this Guide



Community Cinema is a rare public forum: a space for people to gather who are connected by a love of stories, and a belief in their power to change the world. This discussion guide is designed as a tool to facilitate dialogue, and deepen understanding of the complex issues in the film *Medora*. It is also an invitation to not only sit back and enjoy the show – but to step up and take action. This guide is not meant to be a comprehensive primer on a given topic. Rather, it provides important context, and raises thought provoking questions to encourage viewers to think more deeply. We provide suggestions for areas to explore in panel discussions, in the classroom, in communities, and online. We also provide valuable resources, and connections to organizations on the ground that are fighting to make a difference.

For information about the program, visit www.communitycinema.org



From the Filmmaker

Medora, Indiana, is one of those tiny, rural towns where the factories have shut down, drugs have moved in, and things have grown dire. Its high school boys' basketball team, the Medora Hornets, has also suffered, losing games by outrageous margins, and often finishing the season without a single win. It's no surprise that a 2009 article in *The New York Times* about the Hornets' struggles and the dwindling town of Medora would captivate the two of us—lifelong friends who met on a basketball court in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which is surrounded by decaying Rust Belt factory towns and farm towns itself, just a few hours north of Medora.

As founders and editors of *Found Magazine*, which collects notes and letters plucked up off the ground and the street, and frequent contributors to public radio's *This American Life* and the McSweeney's Publishing's DVD series *Wholphin*, we've always been fascinated by other people's stories. What would it be like, we wondered, to live in a state where basketball means everything and play for a team that never wins? And what is lost when our country's small towns fade off the map?

The day after reading the *New York Times* piece, the two of us drove from Ann Arbor down to Medora to check out the town with our own eyes. We met the head coach and several players, and spent a couple of hours wandering around town (it didn't take long—the town is tiny). We were struck by Medora's eerie, beautiful silence and stillness, and by the kindness and openness of the people we met. It felt like we'd traversed not only a couple hundred miles south but also a couple of decades back in time. At the end of the night, standing in a gentle snow on empty Main Street, we looked at each other, and agreed: As passionate basketball fans, documentary film junkies, and proud Midwesterners, a movie about Medora was the one we were born to make.

The next fall, with the blessing of Medora High School and the local community, we began to document a year in the life of several Medora basketball players and coaches, following their struggles and triumphs on and off the court. We met Rusty Rogers, a stoic 6'5" center who'd been left virtually homeless, due to his mom's problems with alcohol, and now lived in public housing with his best friend, Zack Fish, Medora's point guard, with whom, by necessity, he shared a twin bed. The team's shooting guard, Dylan McSoley, wrestled with whether or not to make contact with his dad, a man he'd never met, who lived in the next town over. Robby Armstrong, a farmer's son, strived to be the first in his family to complete high school, and had dreams of going to college, while Chaz Cowles, arrested on a gun charge, did his best to stay out of trouble with the law.

Spending so much time with these kids and their three coaches—a cop, a preacher, and a stonecutter—was a profoundly meaningful experience. Every day, we were moved by the people of Medora's generosity in opening their lives to us so completely, and their inspiring courage, heart, and resilience. Living for months on end within the community, attending every practice and game, dining at the Quik Stop, sipping drinks at the Perry Street Tavern, we felt ourselves becoming a part of the fabric of the town. We knew we'd become honorary locals when people stopped us on the street not to ask why

we were filming kids at the park but to ask us for details about the previous night's basketball game. And after spending so much time with these players, gaining such deep insight into the searing challenges they often faced in their home lives, we couldn't help but become the Medora Hornets' biggest fans, desperately hoping they'd get that elusive first win. At the end of a close game, we'd have tears in our eyes, trying to stay focused on filming the action instead of abandoning our cameras to cheer the team on. We've attended hundreds of high school, college, and professional basketball games in our lives, but never felt so invested in rooting for an underdog to prevail. When a team is searching for a single win, every game feels like a championship game, and every night the stakes are high.

For the past decade, roaming around the country on *Found Magazine* tours, we would always notice kids playing in the yard behind some trailer home, visible from the interstate, and wonder who these kids were and what their lives were like. One evening during our time in Medora, as we were filming a pickup game in a player's driveway, we looked up and saw the passing traffic on I-65, and marveled that we'd actually had the opportunity to learn about a set of kids in such raw and vivid detail, and immerse ourselves so deeply in their lives.

Now, a year or two later, after assembling six hundred hours of footage into an 82-minute film, we're excited to finally share this special project with people. It's a story about the value of small towns, an elegy to a way of life that is being left behind, a testament to basketball's power to connect us and teach life's big lessons, and a revealing look into a group of young men who refuse to give up, even with brutal odds stacked against them. Medora's story, ultimately, is the story of all small towns across the United States valiantly struggling for survival.

Thank you for taking the time to check out our film and for helping to spread the word!



— Andrew Cohn and Davy Rothbart, Directors of *Medora*



The Film

Medora, Indiana, is a tiny town that was once bustling. Now, jobs are scarce, the poverty rate is high, and those who could, have left for greener pastures. The town is struggling to stay alive, and the one glimmer of hope resides in the high school and its basketball team. Like the town, the team is also struggling, trying to face down a string of losing seasons. *Medora* tells the story of a team and a small rural town whose fates are intertwined, both hoping for a win that will lift their spirits and give them a taste of former times.

Archival footage shows Medora's liveliness in the 1950s, when the town had some industries, thriving businesses, and a winning basketball team. Scenes of Medora today reveal boarded-up buildings, empty streets, and neighborhoods of ramshackle trailer homes. The high school, which was never large, has dwindled down to just 72 students, 33 of whom are boys. With this small population, Medora fields a basketball team as well as a cheerleading squad. High schools in Indiana have undergone consolidation and Medora is under pressure to follow suit and merge with other schools. But the residents are reluctant to do so, knowing that if the high school closes, it will be the death knell for the town.

Medora follows the Medora Hornets varsity basketball team over the course of the 2011 season, capturing the players' stories both on and off the court. The Hornets have had a multiseason losing streak, and the team's struggle to compete parallels the town's fight for survival. The film focuses on four of the players, and in doing so, brings to light some of the problems dogging Medora.

- **Rusty Rogers** shows the trailer that was his first home and talks about his parents' abusive relationship and his mother's battle with alcoholism and periods of rehab. His disruptive family life made him leave home and quit school for a time.
- **Dylan McSoley** is a religious young man who never knew his father. His ambition is to be a preacher. He struggles over wanting to meet his father and finally sends him an email. They meet for the first time at McSoley's graduation.
- **Chaz Cowles** is often in trouble. His family is very poor, unable even to provide proper clothing for him. He has a bad reputation, and after missing two basketball practices, he is thrown off the team.
- **Robby Armstrong** is from a farm family. He wants to go to college, but he has a learning disability and college might be challenging. He applies to a technical school in Chicago and gets accepted.

As the basketball season wears on, the Hornets continue to lose games. Justin Gilbert, the team's coach, stays positive, expressing his faith in his players, and the families keep attending games and supporting the team. Finally, in a heart-stopping game against Columbus Christian, the Hornets break their losing streak.

Although the win is cause for celebration, it is clear that it will take more than winning a basketball game to put Medora on an upward trajectory. As the players who are featured in the film find their paths after graduation, the town of Medora continues to grapple with the challenge of holding on to its small-town way of life while finding a new way into the future.

Selected Individuals featured in *Medora*



Featured team members

Rusty Rogers – Center
Dylan McSoley – Shooting guard
Zack Fish – Point guard
Robby Armstrong – Power forward
Chaz Cowles – Shooting guard
Logan Farmer – Power forward

Coaches

Justin Gilbert – Head coach
Rudie Crane – Assistant coach



Medora has been selected to be part of the national television programming for American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen. American Graduate is a long-term public media commitment, made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), that helps communities identify and implement solutions to the high school dropout crisis. Beyond providing programming that educates, informs, and inspires, public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – are an important resource in helping to address critical issues, such as the dropout rate. In addition to national programming, public television and radio stations across the country have launched on-the-ground efforts, working with communities and at-risk youth to keep students on track to high school graduation. More than a thousand partnerships have been formed locally through *American Graduate*, and CPB is working with Alma and Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Learn more at

<http://www.americangraduate.org>



Background Information

The Town of Medora

Medora, Indiana, is a tiny rural town located in the southern part of the state, 30 miles southeast of Bloomington and 47 miles northeast of Louisville, Kentucky. It was once a thriving town, but like so many others, it has experienced major economic changes and a large decline in population since the 1960s. Medora was formerly the home of three large feed mills, an automotive plastics factory, and a brick plant, which provided employment for the town's residents. By the early 1990s, the plastics factory and brick plant were closed, and only one of the feed mills remained. According to the 2010 census, Medora has a population of 693, a figure that is about 30 percent smaller than it was in 1990, the year the town's population peaked. The enrollment at Medora High School for 2010–2011 was 72 students, making it the fifth-smallest public high school in Indiana. In 2011, the estimated median household income in Medora was \$26,989 (estimated per capita income was \$13,426) and the percentage of residents living in poverty was 27.9 percent. Four out of five students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Drug problems, broken families, and poverty mark Medora as a town on the decline, but the residents of this “no-stoptlight town” of shuttered storefronts and trailer homes seem determined to hang on and keep their town alive.

Sources:

- » <http://www.city-data.com/city/Medora-Indiana.html>
- » http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/28/sports/28medora.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- » <http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/1f033e18e9204d9d9dbea2b40a1269cc4a/IN--Medoras-Struggle>

Small-Town America

Small-town life is often touted as an ideal: Small towns are the best place to raise a family; they are the wellspring of American values, and the home of solid citizens. How often have we heard candidates for political office refer to small towns as “the real America”? The demise of small towns is lamented by people of all stripes who see the disappearance of these places as lessen-

ing the quality of life in America. Are small towns really the model places they are often made out to be, or do they represent a mythic ideal that only exists in our collective consciousness? Here are some characteristics of small-town life:

- **Cost of Living:** Housing is usually cheaper, but lack of competition results in some things, such as food or clothing, being more expensive.
- **Employment:** Job opportunities for high-skilled work are limited, while low-skilled work opportunities are dwindling with factory closures.
- **Pace of Life:** Daily activities are free of hustle and bustle, making for less stress. This can be undone, however, if living in a small town requires a long commute to work or low wages require multiple jobs.
- **Space:** People can live comfortable distances apart rather than crowded together in smaller dwellings. Open, natural areas are closer and more easily accessible.
- **Transportation:** Few public transportation options are available, making it a necessity to bear the financial burden of a vehicle and the ability to drive.
- **Education:** Course offerings and school resources are limited, as are sports and extracurricular activities.
- **Medical Services:** Access to doctors, hospitals, and emergency care may be unavailable and require traveling to a larger town or city.
- **Sense of Community:** With a small population, friendly encounters are frequent; people get to know one another more easily, creating a closer sense of community.
- **Homogeneity:** In general, there is very little diversity in the population. A person who is “different” might experience intolerance.
- **Crime:** While not crime-free, there is generally a much lower rate of violent crime.



Decline of Small Towns

The American landscape is constantly changing, and as change takes place, the population shifts to areas with more resources, more jobs, and more lifestyle opportunities. One such shift occurred in the 1970s, precipitated by the closing of factories and the relocation of industries to other parts of the country or the outsourcing of production to offshore facilities. People left the Rust Belt cities of the North and streamed south to find jobs and better weather, leaving behind boarded-up businesses, closed schools, and shrunken neighborhoods. A slower and different kind of change has taken place over the lifetime of the country. From a land where only 5 percent of the population lived in cities in 1790, the United States has evolved into a nation where over 80 percent now live in cities and urban areas. One effect of that rural-to-urban movement has been the decline of small towns, many of which started as commercial centers for farmers.

Over the last century, the number of farmers has dropped precipitously. In 1940, there were more than six million farms throughout the United States and more than 30 million people living on or near farms. Technological advances, economic conditions, and farm policy have spurred a move toward corporate-style farms and the loss of smaller family farms. The number of farms has fallen to two million, and the farm population has dropped by 80 percent, to just slightly over 6 million today.

In addition to losing so much of the population that depended on small towns for services and supplies, several other factors contributed to the demise of these places. The development of the *interstate highway system* meant that travelers no longer had to go through small towns on secondary roads, but could speed up their trips, stopping at the highway restaurant for their meals. Shoppers could also find a variety of stores at an enclosed mall with easy access just off the highway. Businesses in towns suffered as a result. *Globalization* and the downsizing of American industries caused once-bustling towns to lose major sources of employment and reduced the local tax base. As *media and information technologies* expanded, people's tastes changed and they sought different lifestyles in other places.

Sources:

- » http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/200107/09_haega_smalltowns1/
- » <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2012/09/how-main-street-can-be-saved/3200/>

Where Are People Going?

Census data comparing 2000 and 2010 show that people are leaving the Midwest and Corn Belt states and heading west. In the first decade of this century, states that lost significant portions of their nonmetropolitan population were Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota, along with parts of Iowa and Montana. States that gained the most nonmetropolitan population were Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and parts of Arizona and Colorado. Overall, nonmetropolitan (or exurban) areas—that is, areas beyond the suburbs of cities—are experiencing the greatest growth, and at a rate faster than cities and suburbs. Unsurprisingly, areas with some amenities, such as shopping or recreation, are the most popular choices of places to live. A Pew Research Center survey done in 2009 found that Americans living in suburbs were significantly more satisfied with their communities than were residents of cities, small towns, or rural areas, but when asked where they would prefer to live, a higher percentage chose small town over suburb, city, or rural area. Thus, while the exurbs may not qualify as small towns, they may approximate that small-town ideal that so many people seek.

Sources:

- » <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/02/26/suburbs-not-most-popular-but-suburbanites-most-content/>
- » <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2012/07/exurbs-fastest-growing-areas-us/2636/>

Medora's Graduation Rate

In 2012, 12 of Medora's 14 high school seniors graduated, making the town's graduation rate on par with federal estimates of 87 percent for the state of Indiana. The graduation rate—a key success indicator for schools—has risen in strides at Medora High School, up from a paltry 68 percent in 2009. It currently ranks approximately 240th on the list of 350 Indiana schools. With the U.S. graduation rate at 75 percent, Indiana is among the nation's high achievers.

Sources

<http://indianapublicmedia.org/stateimpact/graduation-rates-2012/>

- **Family–Teacher Relationships:** Because families often stay for generations in a small town, educators end up teaching siblings and children of former students. This allows for stronger teacher–parent relationships, which can better support a student at risk of dropping out.
- **Active Learning:** Hands-on learning activities, such as outdoor projects or community service projects, are ideal in rural settings. Partnerships with local businesses can also offer opportunities for career-based learning such as apprenticeships and internships.

Source:

<http://www.icfi.com/insights/white-papers/2013/dropout-prevention-challenges-opportunities-rural-settings>

Challenges Facing Rural Schools

The graduation rate for rural schools across the United States is 77.5 percent, slightly higher than the national average and that of urban-center schools. Yet, rural schools lag significantly behind those in suburban and small metro areas in student graduation. With much of the research efforts focused on curbing the urban dropout rate, rural schools tend to be overlooked by the education movement. Rural schools face unique challenges that require attention:

- **Limited Funding Sources:** Shrinking business sectors and incomes in rural areas result in a lower local tax base to fund education. As a result, rural schools spend less on education per student than urban or suburban areas.
- **Declining Student Populations:** Graduates who aspire to attend college or pursue a high-skilled job must often leave small towns for urban centers, taking an educated generation with them. Those who stay may not perceive a high school diploma as necessary for finding low-skilled work nearby.
- **Underqualified Teachers:** With a limited candidate pool, rural schools may have difficulty finding staff with advanced teacher or administrative training. Teachers may be asked to teach outside of their subject area to fill positions, resulting in lower-quality instruction.

Strengths of Rural Schools

The characteristics of small towns also offer advantages in addressing the dropout rate that urban or suburban schools lack. Here are strengths that rural schools can leverage to change the fate of their students and local economies on the whole:

- **School–Community Collaboration:** The close-knit nature of small-town communities allows adult mentors to take more active roles in students' lives. A school can serve as a community center, offering a gathering space for the town's citizens and elevating its status in the area.

School Consolidation

In states across the country, school consolidation efforts have been going on since the 1960s. Some states, including Indiana, have mandated consolidation, withholding state aid from districts that refuse to comply; others have offered incentives in the form of grants and other aid to cover the costs of consolidation. Two key arguments used to justify consolidation of school districts are:

- **Economic:** Combining smaller districts into larger ones saves money: Fewer districts means that fewer administrators are required, and schools can take advantage of economies of scale.
- **Educational:** Larger districts are able to offer more academic choices as well as a variety of extracurricular activities. Large districts can attract better teachers, leading to improved student outcomes. Studies have shown that consolidating school districts generates expenses—such as transportation of students and construction of new facilities—that offset at least some of the savings, and that it can take as long as a decade to realize significant cost reduction overall. Proponents of smaller schools cite statistics showing greater incidents of violence in large schools and claim that in the impersonal atmosphere of large schools, students—especially those who are struggling—get less personal attention.

Consolidation proposals are often controversial and meet with resistance from parents and communities. Opposition arises from two sources: In small towns particularly (but also in urban neighborhoods), the school is usually the heart of the community, and closing the school can have a detrimental effect on morale. In addition, the right to local control of schools is a strongly held belief in the United States; getting orders from a remote state agency about what is considered a local matter is seen as cause for resistance.

Are Athletes More Likely to Graduate?

Resoundingly, yes. Sixty percent of high school students participate in sports. Despite the significant time investment athletics demands, athletes outperform nonathletes in grade point average (GPA), attendance, and diplomas. Teams typically require a minimum GPA to participate and have conduct codes to deter students from getting in trouble. Coaches also provide key mentorship outside of the classroom and team members often act as positive peer influences.

Source:

<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/high-school-athletes-gpa-vs-average-high-school-students-gpa-3702.html>

Effects on Indiana Basketball Traditions

In Indiana, where basketball and community are closely tied together, school consolidation, which was mandated in the late 1950s, resulted in significant changes for what is known as “Hoosier hysteria.” For many small towns the basketball team was a source of pride, and games provided an exciting shared social event as the whole community rallied around the team. Now, in some cases, old rivals are sharing a school, requiring a shift in the idea of *community*. Some small towns that lost their schools disappeared altogether, morphing into bedroom communities for nearby cities. This is a fate that Medora is struggling to avoid.

Sources:

- » <http://www.occasionalplanet.org/2011/04/06/when-school-districts-consolidate-pros-cons/>
- » <http://www.usatodayhss.com/indianapolis/article/school-consolidations-have-changed-indiana-basketball-landscape--2012207010339>

Indiana Basketball on the Big Screen

The 1986 film *Hoosiers* told a David-and-Goliath story about a small-town basketball team that defeated a large city team to win the state high school basketball championship. The film is loosely based on the 1954 game between the Milan High School Indians and the Muncie Central Bearcats. Milan (161 students) had a 19–2 season, won seven of eight tournament games by double digits, and defeated the powerhouse team from the much larger Muncie Central 32–30.

Source:

http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/conscientious_objector.aspx

Following the Game

For the uninitiated, or those who need a refresher, here are a few key basketball terms:

Bank Shot: a shot where the ball is first bounced (or banked) off the backboard at such an angle that it then drops into the basket

Dunk or Slam Dunk: when a player close to the basket jumps and strongly throws the ball down into it; an athletic, creative shot used to intimidate opponents

Fastbreak: an offensive strategy in which a team attempts to move the ball down court and into scoring position as quickly as possible so that the defense is outnumbered and does not have time to set up

Full-Court Press: a defensive tactic in which a team guards the opponents closely for the full length of the court

Layup or Layin: a shot taken close to the basket by leaping up under the basket and using one hand to either drop the ball directly into the basket (layin) or to bank the ball off the backboard into it (layup)

One-and-One: the “bonus” free-throw situation awarded for nonshooting fouls after the opposing team exceeds a certain number of team fouls in a half; the person fouled shoots one free throw, and if successful, takes a second shot

Press: an aggressive defense that attempts to force the opponents to make errors by guarding them closely from either half court, three-quarter court, or full court

Ten-Second Line: the mid-court line over which the offensive team must advance the ball from the backcourt within 10 seconds to avoid a violation; referred to in the film as the *timeline*

Three-Point Field Goal: a made basket from a distance greater than 19 feet and 9 inches during a high school or college game

Traveling: a violation occurring when the player with the ball takes a step without dribbling

Sources:

- » <http://www.hoopsu.com/basketball-terminology/>
- » http://www.firstbasesports.com/basketball_glossary.html



Topics and Issues Relevant to *Medora*

A screening of *Medora* can be used to spark interest in any of the following topics and inspire both individual and community action. In planning a screening, consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

Decline of small towns

Challenges and strengths of rural schools

Role of school in community life

School consolidation

Changes in U.S. industry

Structural unemployment

Role of sports for adolescents

Changes in the U.S. economy

Importance of small towns in American culture

Sports and team loyalty in American life

4. The older residents of Medora remember a more prosperous time for the town when the basketball team had a winning record. Do you think this legacy has an effect on the current team? If so, in what way?
5. In your estimation, what is the biggest contributing factor to the team's inability to win games?
6. If the basketball team represents a microcosm of the town, how would you characterize Medora? Based on what you saw in the film, what are the future prospects for the members of the team, especially those who have had problematic family lives?
7. In his speech shown in the film, President Obama says that the world has changed and we must change with it. What will it take for the residents of Medora to accept and adapt to the changes in their town?
8. In the film, a resident of Medora says that "the country is based on these small towns." What does he mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?
9. Is it worth the effort to keep a small town like Medora alive? What would it take to ensure a viable future?
10. What do you see as the message of this film?

Thinking More Deeply

1. Why is having its own school so important to a small town like Medora?
2. Is it realistic to try to keep the Medora schools from consolidating? Are the citizens of Medora limiting the options of their young people by refusing to consolidate? Explain your response.
3. Besides their educational function, what role do the schools play in your community? What parallels, if any, do you see to the schools' role in Medora?

Suggestions for Action

1. Support local American Graduate initiatives. Public television stations across the country are organizing special events and programming for the American Graduate campaign. Get involved by mobilizing local school representatives, youth, parents, and business leaders to participate in conversations that address challenges and harness the strengths of your local community to increase graduation rates. Learn more about the campaign at <http://www.americangraduate.org>.
2. What is the status of school consolidation in your state? The website of the National Conference of State Legislatures contains information on legislation affecting the merger of school districts in each state. To find out more, visit the website at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-and-district-consolidation.aspx>. If consolidation has already taken place, find out what evaluations are planned or have been done to assess the financial and educational results at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/education-bill-tracking-database.aspx>.
3. Find out about programs available to youth – especially disadvantaged youth – in your community and volunteer to help out, either by working directly with the young participants or by raising funds. If there is a lack of programs, work with members of the business, faith, and education communities to start one.
4. The USDA Cooperative Extension Service provides the public with educational and technical services pertaining to rural and agricultural issues. Contact your local extension office to find out about volunteer opportunities. For more information and the location of the nearest extension office, go to <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/qlinks/extension.html>.
5. The Center for Rural Strategies sponsors several advocacy projects designed to shape a positive image of rural America. Get information about their projects at <http://www.ruralstrategies.org/projects/Advocacy> and find out how you can be involved.
6. Learn about U.S. farm policy and the implications of the 2012 Farm Bill for rural America. A summary of the bill and the issues is on the website of the Center for Rural Affairs (<http://www.cfra.org/>). Make your views about the bill known to your representatives in Congress.

For additional outreach ideas, visit <http://www.itvs.org>, the website of the Independent Television Service (ITVS). For local information, check the website of your PBS station.



Resources

» <http://medorafilm.com/home.html>

This is the website for the film.

» <http://www.americangraduate.org>

The official website of the American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen campaign, a long term public media commitment, supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), to help communities implement solutions to the high school dropout crisis.

Small Town Information

» <http://www.city-data.com/smallTowns.html>

City-Data.com is a web resource that provides data about cities on a wide range of topics, including geographical information, crime, unemployment, housing, and infrastructure. It also lists small towns (population under 1,000) in each state.

» <http://www.morris.umn.edu/cst/>

The Center for Small Towns at the University of Minnesota, Morris is a community outreach program that provides such things as assistance in brokering resources, program evaluation, and applied research and information on the challenges and issues facing rural communities.

» <http://heritageamerican.wordpress.com/2009/03/>

The Heritage American is a blog of weekly essays on topics pertaining to American culture, traditionalist conservatism, politics, race, and immigration. This link goes to a thoughtful article entitled "The Fate of Small Towns is the Fate of America."

» <http://www.newgeography.com/content/0035-contributors>

NewGeography.com is a site devoted to analyzing and discussing the places where we live and work and how individuals, companies, and communities can best adapt to rapidly changing conditions. The article "America Is More Small Town Than We Think" (<http://www.newgeography.com/content/00242-america-more-small-town-we-think>) makes a case for small, local governance.

Rural Issues

» <http://www.cfra.org/>

The Center for Rural Affairs is an advocacy organization focused on both federal policy in health care, clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and community development, and how policies affect rural and small-town America.

» <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/>

The Carsey Institute conducts policy research on vulnerable children, youth, and families and on sustainable community development. Among its major research and policy areas is "Rural America."

» <http://www.ruraledu.org/index.php>

The Rural School and Community Trust is a national nonprofit organization that addresses the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities by providing a variety of services—training, networking, technical assistance, coaching, mentoring, and research—and materials to

increase the capacity of rural schools, teachers, young people, and communities to develop and implement high-quality place-based education.

» <http://www.ruralstrategies.org/>

The Center for Rural Strategies seeks to improve economic and social conditions for communities in the countryside and around the world through the creative and innovative use of media and communications. By presenting accurate and compelling portraits of rural lives and cultures, they hope to deepen public debate and create a national environment in which positive change for rural communities can occur.

» <http://www.dailyyonder.com/rural-america-2000s-population/2010/07/12/2834>

The Daily Yonder, published by the Center for Rural Strategies, is a daily multimedia source of news, commentary, research, and features about rural America. This page provides recent statistics on rural populations in the United States.

» <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america.aspx#.UsbhNSjFVdg>

The Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America assembles statistics on four broad categories of socioeconomic factors—people, jobs, agriculture, and county classifications—which can be viewed as interactive maps.

Indiana High School Basketball

» <http://www.ihigh.com/ihsbhs/>

This is the website of the Indiana High School Basketball Historical Society, the home of Hoosier Hysteria stories, stats, and photos.

» <http://www.tribstar.com/news/x955426869/Author-gathers-basketball-history-on-1-200-Indiana-high-schools>

This article is about author Emerson Houck and the trove of historical information he found for his book on Indiana high school basketball history: *Hoosiers All: Indiana High School Basketball*.

School Consolidation

» <http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/promises-and-perils-school-district-consolidation>

The Council of State Governments' brief entitled "The Promises and Perils of School District Consolidation" takes a look at the experiences and outcomes in different states.

» http://www.ehow.com/info_7931065_pros-cons-school-consolidation.html

This site offers a quick overview of the pros and cons of consolidation.

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