The 2021 contestants had to write an essay based on the question:

Credit Unions abide by the principals that foster community 'people helping people'. What do you think individuals can do to foster unity in their communities?

Taylor Murray

"Unity and diversity are not opposites. We can achieve greater unity as we foster an atmosphere of inclusion and respect for diversity." – Quentin L. Cook. This quote I learned from my grandmother several years ago. She was someone that always believed that regardless of the color of your skin, your profession, hobbies, likes/dislikes, everyone can come together to achieve a common goal.

I believe that there is never enough of 'people helping people' in a community. Coming together to help each other and stay active within your town can make such a big impact (in rural communities, especially). There are several things I believe that individuals can do in order to foster unity within their communities.

The first thing I believe is continuing to do blood drives, but help bring in a younger crowd such as the teenagers who are able to donate blood. When I donated blood for the first time at 16, it brought a sense of pride within me knowing I was helping save a life (3 to be exact). Another thing I believe people could promote is helping our local veterans. Regardless of who you are, our troops do much more than meet the eye in order for us to keep our rights. Doing fundraisers, dinners, etc. for them. Something little like that to show our appreciation to them. The last thing I believe could help bring unity to a community is to do a "community enhancement" project. Whether that is picking up trash around town, painting benches at the park, or even going and washing windows for the local businesses. In rural towns, what makes the town is the people who live there. What we receive form our community, is what we put into it. All of the things that I have listed above are small, yet can make such a big impact on a small (and even big) community. Afterall, it is the little things in life that matter the most.

Ashley Foos

Individuals can do a lot when it comes to fostering unity within their community. One of the best ways to unify a community is to look outside of race, ethnicity, or even look beyond whether or not their last name is considered respectable. We often judge people based on things they cannot control instead of getting to know them as a person. That is often why in high school and even among adults there seem to be specific cliques or friend groups. There are also many people who may fail to provide basic needs for their children. As a community, it is our duty to help those around us by donating food to the food bank, donating school supplies to the school, or even doing an angel tree around Christmas time. The elderly are also in need. Many of the residents at the Highrise and at the Senior Center receive few visitors, especially during this time. One thing anyone could do is write a letter and let them know someone is thinking about them and leave it open for them to write back if they wish. Donate puzzle or things for the elderly to do throughout their day. Athletes could also use the support right now as spectators aren't allowed at their games. Most games are broadcasted and can either be live-streamed or listened to on the radio. Tell them good luck beforehand or congratulate them afterward. Before away games,

you could even provide snacks for them to take since many schools aren't having concession stands. As a community, we also need to respect the area around us by throwing trash away where it goes and by picking up any we may find. It makes everything look better and also makes people proud of their community. During COVID-19 I have seen many people of our community come together to help each other out by running errands while a friend or family member is in quarantine, by purchasing a flat fan, by visiting loved ones through a hospital window, and grieving the loss of a loved one together. People find a way to come together during a tragedy, but if we acted kindly towards one another on a regular basis the world would be a better place. The little things add up to make someone smile and I'm sure many of us would wish to receive any act of kindness that is shown. In the end, there is always something move we could do to help foster unity among our community. It's up to you to be the change.