

On the *Soul* of Our Town

by [scott pickard](#)



Reference is made to the full-page ad (message?) that ran on page A-5 in the *News Gazette* on Friday, August 24, 2018. My wife was reading the paper that day and then handed it over to me pointing to the ad and said, "What do you think this is?" I'm not sure what the organizers of this ad were shooting for when they concluded "you just can't put into words what CU means to each of us," so I had no good answer for her at the time, but it made me think about it.

One of our favorite spots in town is the playground at Hessel Park where we routinely take our four grandchildren when they are in town. When you are at this playground, you are one of many adults and kids that are immersed in and sharing in the exuberant world of play: kids climbing and jumping and running and laughing; and adults standing and chatting and smiling and reminiscing about their own childhood days. As you look around you see parents and kids and grandparents and grandkids of all stripes and stations, all nationalities, all races, all religions, all identities. While the kids are playing, the adults are striking up conversations with strangers while they keep a watchful eye on their kids: Where are you from? What brought you to CU? What do you do? Where do your kids go to school? How about those Illini? ... and on and on it goes. In the midst of the playground experience, it is so clear to me that we all want the same thing in life, which is to build and enjoy happy, fulfilling, and loving lives with our respective families.

I have all always appreciated the fact that CU's social milieu embraces people from all walks of life. And it just so happens that the town enjoys a lucky balance between being not too small and not too big in both population and physical size, such that we bump into each other daily at the grocery store, the workplace, the football stadium, the park, the church, the mall, the pool, the movie theater, the outdoor restaurant, and all the places we go. We work and play together in a friendly and mutually respectful

way that inspires productivity, creativity, and innovation. This, for me, is the *soul* of CU that makes it such a special community.

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