

NASA

Don't just decrease the suck; increase the awesome

By Rick.Hanton@iowastatedaily.com

It seems that politicians are constantly coming up with new ways to reduce suck in the running of our state and country.

"We're going to decrease the budget deficit" they say. "We're going to improve health care."

"We're going to remove legal restrictions for businesses."

"We're going to prove/disprove that President Obama is an American citizen," and so on.

While reducing the ways that the government or life in general sucks is admirable, I think that politicians as well as you and I should also focus our efforts on increasing awesome

in the world.

My inspiration for this column comes from some of the video blogs I've been watching that were created by "the Vlogbrothers" otherwise known as Hank and John Green on YouTube.

The two brothers have spent the last four years creating an online army of "nerdfighters" whose stated goal is to increase awesome and decrease suck in the world. If you're interested, you should definitely check out the Vlogbrothers YouTube channel or their nerdfighters networking site. In any case, these two guys do a great job at making entertaining videos about

nerdy topics and world events.

In the case of Hank's latest video, the topic is NASA. NASA is one of a small number of government agencies that are particularly aimed toward increasing awesome rather than just decreasing suck in the world. If you look at agencies like NASA or the National Science Foundation, they aim to go out and solve tough problems and in the process they come up with tons of awesome new things.

You can thank NASA for things like bar codes, advanced robotics, crucial baby formula ingredients, novel injury treatments, Lasic surgery tools, weather satellites and much,

much more.

It's amazing that many of those things were developed or discovered as NASA studied technology they needed for something else, but that's precisely what makes them awesome.

There are tons of other agencies out there in government that are simply trying to decrease suck. Maybe that suck is terrorists attacking innocent people in the U.S. or your grandmother fighting the aches and pains of growing older. Many people in the Middle East have decided their governments suck, so we have done what we can to help them decrease that suck,

too, over the last number of months and years.

But, as Hank said, "We can't only work on decreasing suck around the world. We always need to spend some time, effort and money on increasing awesome." This is the kind of awesome created by people at NASA, Google, Apple or by people at the countless other amazing companies and research and development labs around the country every day.

It doesn't have to be just the geniuses at Google or NASA that spend some of their time helping increase awesome. You can help increase awesome and decrease suck, too. As you head off to take more

classes or work at a company once the semester ends, think about how you can help increase awesome and/or decrease suck in the world today.

Maybe you can do something simple like volunteer some time for others, or maybe you want to do something complex like cure a disease or build a better widget. There are tons of ways that you can help reduce suck or increase awesome every day.

However you do it, please continue to seek out ways to decrease suck and increase awesome, because if we don't help the world become a better place to live in, there's no guarantee that anyone else will.

Comment of the day

The following comment was left in response to the April 27 story, "LANE4 seeks student, community input for Campustown renovations":

"Campustown is meant to serve students, not East Ames. It's a tiny part of Ames that serves students, why are we trying to take that away from students? Is it so bad that a part of Ames is there to take care of our needs?"


Adding a hotel is going to do nothing to serve the needs of the students. Why is the focus being shifted from the main customer base over to ones that don't come to this area on a regular basis? Where is the logic in that?"

I would also like to point out that some of LANE4's assertions appear to be false. In the plans they presented there is no green space. And adding parking lots and parking garages is somehow supposed to improve the cosmetics of the area? Personally I feel that the current look is good - it has an old school, small town feel. It just needs to be cleaned up a bit.

If you're that desperate to dump money into the area to "revitalize" it (which doesn't need to be revitalized by the way, most of the businesses there are healthy) then try this: make Welch ave from copyworks to the fire station a pedestrian only street. Only fire trucks can get in and out. Cobble the street if you really want to. Focus on the cosmetics, give the buildings facelifts (while keeping the integrity of what's already there) and try to avoid ripping buildings out to put up new ones. Bring some of the plant life from around lake la verne over to campustown.

I offer these amendments in acknowledgement that campustown can LOOK better. But trying to mess with what businesses are there is just too much. That's taking power away from business owners, from the consumers that use them, and it's ultimately caused the downfall of many other cities that have tried "revitalization" projects. The businesses there are currently successful, let's not take their livelihoods from them. Let's instead make the place look better, which seems to be everyone's main concern in trying to change campustown, and keep it as an area that serves students the way it is meant to."

— Brett Elliot



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