

Good evening, everyone.

It's great to see so many people here to honor our good friend and neighbor, John Smith. Even though we are of many different ages and have all kinds of jobs and interests, it is certain that we all have one thing in common: our admiration of a man who never quits until the job is done. That man, of course, is John Smith.

I've known John for about 10 years. I first met him at a Little League game shortly after we moved here and my wife and I were watching Timmy play. He was about 8 years old at the time. Anyway, this woman sitting near us was complaining about the sun. I remembered my wife and I were almost annoyed because you expect sun in an afternoon baseball game and we were glad the game wasn't rained out. But the woman kept going on and on about how we needed some clouds to break up the sun. John was also sitting nearby.

Not one to just listen, John went over to the lady and said, "I can't do anything about the weather but maybe this will help." He handed her an umbrella that he had gone to his car to get and urged her to use it as a shield from the sun. She was ecstatic. As it turned out, some friends had given her a ride to the game and it was the one chance she had to see her nephew play. But because she had had some skin cancers removed, she was justifiably concerned about the sun.

Had John done nothing, the rest of us would have continue to listen to her complaining – which was not something we wanted to hear – and the sun exposure might have given her more problems down the road. I was so impressed with what John had done, I knew that this was someone I wanted to know and so I introduced myself. John and I have been close friends ever since.

As all of you know, John is a native of Charleston. In fact, he's helped many in this room get to know this city and introduced us to the joys and peculiarities of Lowcountry life. He knows the high and low places – not that there are that many high places in the Lowcountry.

John can tell you when the first settlers came and where the pirates stashed their treasure. He knows where to eat, to drink, to play and to escape – something that many of us do far too seldom. He knows what is in the newspaper before it is printed, and he keeps his hand on the pulse of the community better than anyone else I know.

We all know something else about John. He doesn't just look around and see things that need attention. He takes action. We all see the same things that John sees. There are jobs that need to be done, problems that need to be solved. And as we look at those and think about our busy lives, we most likely say to ourselves, "Somebody will take care of that." We mean well but we just don't get around to doing anything.

John is the person who does something.

When we look at this community center – which was only a dream five years ago – many of us were in that camp that said “We really do need a place where neighbors can meet, where children can play after school and where senior citizens can get some support and companionship. Somebody needs to do something.”

Well, that somebody was John Smith. He saw possibilities where the rest of us saw need.

He saw opportunity where the rest of us saw problems.

He didn’t say, “Let somebody else do it.” He said, “I’ll take that on.”

With the hustle of the Energizer Bunny, John started talking and raising money. All John’s talk and enthusiasm gave the rest of us what we needed most – and that was leadership.

He was the quarterback in a drive that took us from a dream to a reality....the reality of this fine building we will enjoy for years.

So John, on behalf of everyone here, I’d like to say thanks for being a man of action and not just words. You got us started, rallying many people to work together to complete this community center. It would never have happened without you.

So join me in giving John a round of applause and a big thank you.