

Hiawatha man planning his future in town

By Cynthia Petersen
Today News

Christopher James Flynn, or CJ as he is also known, likes the idea of being a part of a community.

He can be found at most Hiawatha events, talking with his neighbors, networking with the local businesses, getting to know the newcomers, or getting his hair cut at Barbers Etc.

"Hiawatha is a great community," he said. "But like any community, there are a few things we can improve on. I wish our residents would get more involved with city planning, serve on boards, or be on the city council."

Flynn, 23, is the son of Suellen and Jim Flynn. The family has lived in Hiawatha since CJ was 2. He attended Hiawatha Elementary school and graduated from Kennedy High School in 2012, where he was active in several leadership groups.

"I was in the Youth Leadership for Five Seasons program while I was in high school," he said. "I think that's what really got me excited about the greater Cedar Rap-



CJ Flynn

ids community."

Flynn graduated from Kirkwood Commu-

nity College with an Associate's degree in marketing management and is active in one of the Toastmaster's clubs there.

"It's really helping me with my public speaking," he said. "I am also the club's vice-president of marketing, and I'm getting them some publicity right now with this article," he said with a grin.

Flynn said he plans to stay in Hiawatha to help build the community.

"My long-term goal is to be mayor of Hiawatha someday," he said. "It's where I grew up. It's my home."

He said another plan for his future includes purchasing a duplex in Hiawatha.

He is an entrepreneur at heart with ideas for both for-profit and nonprofit enterprises, and continually keeps multiple projects on his plate.

"I am working with a few small businesses, helping them with promotions and marketing," he said.

He created basic websites while attending Kirkwood. His senior year marked the launching of his personal website, cjflynn.com, as well as self-publishing his first book.

Flynn is currently a member of the Friends of the Hiawatha Public Library and is planning to bring Little Free Libraries to two park locations in town.

He is also a member of the Masons, where he is a 3rd degree Master Mason.

Flynn also just finished his fifth year volunteering at Rockwell Educational Access to Computer Technology (REACT Center), an organization based out of Hiawatha that refurbishes used computers and then donates them to Iowa schools. He has learned a lot about computers and technology there.

For the last year, Flynn has donated blood on a regular basis; his short-term goal is to donate a gallon of blood.

"I mostly donate at the Hiawatha fire station, but there are many other places to donate," he said. "Only 38 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to donate blood so I feel that since I can, I should. I want to pay it forward."

"I just thought it was something good to do, not just for myself, but for my community."