

NOTES FROM JEFFERSON COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

This professional project sets out to illustrate the stories, struggles and characters within two small farming communities in rural Nebraska through the vehicle of documentary journalism. The film's director used immersion journalism to gain an intimate view into the lives of two families residing in neighboring towns, where one community is thriving in growth (Diller, NE), and the other declining (Steele City, NE). The primary goal of this project was to compare and contrast the lives of the residents of these two towns with regard to their daily responsibilities, aspirations for the future, as well as their connection to the land and natural environment around them.

One of the film's storylines follows Margo D'Angelo, the owner of Steele City's only business, The Salty Dog Saloon, and her daily routine dealing with unreliable employees, health problems, and her desires for a future liberated from menial responsibility. The second storyline follows a Diller family, the Englemans (Adam and Brooke, and their children Alli, Preston, and Sidney) as they operate their fourth-generation dairy farm, enjoy the Nebraskan summer, and teach their children the responsibility that stewardship of crops and livestock require. The story arcs' differences are symbolized in the film by using the TransCanada Keystone pipeline station located in Steele City and the state's third-largest windfarm located in Diller as symbols of the future of each community – one unsustainable and short-lived, the other renewable and limitless.