

## **CALHOUN COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PROFILE**

### **February 20, 2007**

#### **Characteristics of your Foundation:**

The initial Calhoun County Foundation Board was developed in April, 2005 with a community representative and an alternate appointed from each of the twelve communities within the county (including Twin Lakes). The appointment of the alternate was advantageous as the foundation was started for two reasons. The first was the learning curve on what a community foundation does was “steep” and the need to have community representation at each meeting helped provide continuity from monthly meeting to monthly meeting. Secondly, in order to conduct business the Calhoun County Community Foundation Board needed seven communities represented to have a quorum to conduct business. Family events, business responsibilities, and emergencies come up and may take a community board member away from a foundation board meeting. These community alternates allow for these obligations to occur and still allow business to be conducted at foundation board meetings.

The use of community foundation alternates as part of the Calhoun County Community Foundation Board structure has allowed us to move forward with a potential of 24 residents educated on the concept of “community foundation”. Their circle of influence allows additional people to hear more about what the Calhoun County Community Foundation is doing in the area of philanthropy.

#### **Grantmaking Highlights:**

The Calhoun County Community Foundation received 23 applications requesting \$108,605.50 in grant funding in 2006. The total projects’ cost was over \$903,600.

Ten projects from seven communities were granted \$44,593, ranging in size from \$500 to \$10,000. The total cost of the projects funded was over \$469,000.

#### **Funded projects included:**

- A diving stand and board
- Recreational trail signage
- Playground equipment
- Updated kitchen hood and ductwork
- Stabilization of a Town Hall foundation
- Replacement of library windows
- Computer training classes for the elderly
- Remodeling of a library and community building
- Replacement of swings in three city parks
- Purchasing six fire department pagers

Before the first grants were funded, it was decided not to offer “partial” funding of projects. As projects were ranked, a smaller project farther down the line may be funded with these “odd” dollars.

## Priorities and Plans:

### Priorities include:

- Getting all communities involved.
- Continuing education of local citizens and community groups on the existence of the Calhoun County Community Foundation, its function, and the potential for doing greater things in the local area.
- Presenting the concept of “philanthropy” in a non-threatening format. Not the “ask for your money” approach, but the “what would Calhoun County look like if we had additional funds to work with” approach.
- Achieving our own “success story” to share.
- Funding of more local projects.

### Plans include:

- Providing an educational seminar for local grant requesters to help them get organized. Many have not requested grant dollars previously.
- Fine tuning PowerPoint presentations for local audiences; civic groups, etc.
- Inviting financial advisors to a dinner meeting to learn more about the local community foundation.
- Writing articles for the local newspapers as part of the educational component.

### Accomplishments:

- Representatives from county communities around the table.
- Completed a successful first granting cycle and funded some visible projects.
- Awarded \$1,000 from the Community Vitality Center for a Philanthropy Success Story Achievement Award.
- Active with publicity and presentations to local groups.

### Lessons Learned:

- Utilizing volunteers makes this a slower process; however, volunteerism is vital for success in rural areas.
- For me personally, additional responsibilities and a need for additional expertise.
- Set word limits in the local grant application.
- Changed the maximum grant amount to \$7,500 from \$10,000 to fund additional projects.
- There are groups “biting at the bit” for project funding.

### Challenges and/or Special Needs:

- Get the first checks written from local individuals or groups to move this Community Foundation forward in the philanthropy arena.
- Develop local expertise to discuss philanthropy details with clients.