

JC Community Foundation gives thanks

20th birthday bash honors founders, directors, donors and more

The timing could not have been better for the Jennings County Community Foundation (JCCF) to pause operations and give thanks for 20 years of continued growth and outreach to its hometown and county.

President Greg Hicks made that point crystal clear as he welcomed those attending the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the foundation's birth one week before the Thanksgiving holiday.

The organization's "legacy of doing good" touches every person in this community, whether they are aware of the organization or not, he pointed out. As befitting a 20-year milestone, founding board members were recognized, as well as all former and present directors and leaders.

It was two decades ago that several community members "got together in a chicken house," recalled John Hall, referring to the Purdue Extension offices which were located in a renovated chicken house on South State. Those assembled became determined to establish what was then a novel concept for many here in Jennings- a community foundation.

The Purdue Extension was taking the lead to heed the Lilly Endowment's goal of having a community foundation in every county. Dan Baugh, then the agent here, personally led the effort to establish the non-profit and served as its first president. Working with Baugh were Marie Shepherd, Lester Tracy and John Hall, among others.

The organization is today "a diverse and dedicated group," said Hicks whose assets now total \$5,438,000.

It is an exciting time for the local group, which is in the midst of a Lilly Endowment matching funds initiative. "We want to give you half a million dollars," announced board member Rev. Bob Weeks, explaining that the Endowment has given the **JCCF** that sum to match 50 percent of all donations to so-called "designated" funds where the donor decides who is to receive the annual pay-out.

Donors giving to "undesigned" funds will have their gift matched 100 percent. These funds place the decision on how the annual payout is spent in the hands of the **JCCF** board. The **JCCF** board is attempting to up the number of undesigned funds, to better meet unanticipated needs of the community in the future.

Regardless of the fund, the principle itself, or actual money donated, is never spent. It is the interest that is used to fund the donors' wishes.

Or, as pastor Weeks put it, "This money will be given away till Jesus comes back."

On that cue, Linda Erler, a director of the **JCCF**, announced she and her husband Mark were establishing a non-designated account, the Touch Tomorrow Today Fund, saying "We believe the foundation should have the opportunity to support the community wherever the needs occur."

Those attending were entered into two drawings. The first was for \$1000 to be added to an existing fund, won by Brad Bender; the second was for \$2000 for a new fund, won by Jennifer Sanders.

As those present exited the Shrine Club, Marie Shepherd and Lester Tracy asked for donations to be put in the same coffee can passed around 20 years ago after a meeting. That plea brought in \$67 for the fledgling group.

This time around, the can was filled with almost \$10,000 in donations!

Officers of the **JCCF** are: president, Greg Hicks; vice president, Linda Erler; treasurer, Carolyn Frey; secretary, Brenda Habe-nicht; board members, Darlene Bradshaw, Dr. Bill Burnett, Bill Dillon, Teri Doran, Kathy Dove, Jennifer Franklin, Kathryn Johnson, Dixie Tempest, Sandy Vance and Bob Weeks.



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Picture 1: Founding JCCF director Frank Biehle is greeted by Jane Reynolds, whose husband, James, led the local non-profit for a decade.

Picture 2: Debbie Mahon-Smith of the FLASH (Free Lunch All Summer Hooray!) program signs her grant agreement guided by JCCF's Executive Director Barbara Shaw.



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Picture 1: CCF President and evening emcee Greg Hicks listens as Joanne Campbell describes how Christmas in the City will use the grant it was awarded. Grant committee members and JCCF directors Sandy Vance and Darlene Bradshaw announced the 14 awards.—Staff Photos by Barbara King

Picture 2: Founding board members Lester Tracy and Marie Shepherd announce they are reviving the tradition of "passing the coffee can" for donations, such as was done 20 years ago in an early meeting of the foundation. At that time, \$67 was collected; fast forward to 2014 and almost \$10,000 hit the can.