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Foundation Volunteers work to connect donors with causes

BY LAURA CHRISTOPHER

In a community that thrives on support and benevolence in ever-lasting quests to improve the lives of others, the Smoky Valley Community Foundation is dedicated to doing just that.

Established in 2002, the Smoky Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) is a permanent collection of funds designed to connect donors with charitable causes. Working with donors, the Foundation aims to improve life in terms of education, environment, civic and human services, health care, the arts, and more.

"Bill Carlson was one of the leaders of it, and there were a group of founding donors who contributed funds to get the Foundation started," said Bill Roth, chair of SVCF and a five-year member.

The Smoky Valley Community Foundation is backed by numerous founding donors: Maleta Forsberg; Judy M. Neuschafer; Ronald and Marsha Rolander; Lee and Susie Ruggels; Bethany College; Bethany Home; Carlson Accounting, Inc.; City of Lindsborg; Clark, Mize, and Linville, Chtd.; Lindsborg Commu-

nity Hospital; Raymer Society; and Sandzén Memorial Art Gallery.

The Foundation is operated by a volunteer board: Bill Roth, chair; John Palmquist, Treasurer; Rebecca VanDerWege, Secretary; Maleta Forsberg; Erik Peterson; Karna Peterson; Carol Gusenius; Susie Ruggels; and Greg Lundstrom.

"The Board usually goes out and talks to people to find those who are willing to serve on the Board," Roth said. "Basically it's volunteer with encouragement from the Board."

An affiliate of the Greater Salina Community Foundation, the Smoky Valley Community Foundation promotes charitable giving in numerous ways: assists individuals, families, and organizations in the creation of charitable funds; builds resources to provide for unmet community needs; makes grants to charitable platforms; and provides a platform for long-term development for non-profit organizations and smaller local communities.

"We are one of ten affiliates of the Greater Salina Community Foundation," said Roth. "What that means

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to us is they keep the funds, invest the funds, and do all the legal requirements with the IRS. We don't have to hire someone to do those things ourselves. With a bigger pool of money, they can get a better return on all investments."

The mission of the Smoky Valley Community Foundation is to create endowments that increase the quality of life for current and future generations by reinvesting in the Smoky Valley. To do this, the Foundation aims to inspire and enable donors to fulfill their charitable wishes; assist in the practical management and care of funds; increase nonprofit organization's capabilities to fulfill their individual missions; promote issues to help encourage community philanthropy; and facilitate grants, awards, and scholarships.

SVCF awards biannual grants - in the fall, and in the spring - to help support local nonprofit organizations.

"We award grants primarily to nonprofit organizations," Roth said. "There are two grant cycles. The fall is community enhancement and the spring is the heritage fund."

The current SVCF funds list includes: Smoky Valley Administrative Fund; Smoky Valley Commu-

nity Enhancement Fund; Smoky Valley Healthy Living Fund; Joyce Challans Memorial; Fund for Lindsborg Arts Council; Fund for Trinity United Methodist Church; Clyde and Glen Lindstrom; Messiah Lutheran Church; The Rotary Club of Lindsborg; Heritage Fund; Lindsborg Community Library; Lindsborg Swedish Folk Dancer; and The Associated Churches of Lindsborg.

Since its establishment, SVCF has awarded more than \$19,000 from the Smoky Valley Community Enhancement Fund.

"Nonprofits submit grant applications," said Roth. "Then we as the Board review the applications and decide who and what amount we give grants to."

An integral part of the grants from Smoky Valley Community Foundation are the donors.

"In the past, we haven't gone out and sought donors," Roth said. "But with Grow II that will change."

Grow II Healthy Kansas is a Kansas Health Foundation grant program. Aiming to strengthen Kansas' community foundation field, Grow II has two main goals: to help build permanent resources for Kansas community foundations to improve the health of local residents; and to support collaboration and alliances

among community foundations in order to ensure well-managed and self-sufficient community foundations in Kansas.

The Kansas Health Foundation, in order to reach those goals, has created a program to bestow financial help and incentives to assist Kansas community foundations in building endowment. In this program, the matching grants will be directed toward the administrative endowment and the public health endowment of the community foundation.

The Smoky Valley Community Foundation is applying for a \$300,000 endowment building matching grant from the Kansas Health Foundation.

"The application is due in September," said Roth, "and they announce their decision next March."

At the time of the application, SVCF must have received \$30,000 of the matching grant. Once accepted, the Foundation has six years to complete the program.

"We are in the process of organizing a fund-raising campaign," Roth said. "The exciting thing is if we can get accepted and complete the task, we will have over \$50,000 available in grants each year."

A two-tiered ratio will be used to match new gifts to the SVCF endowment:

- \$1 of match for every \$2 of new gifts to the Administrative Endowment, the Smoky Valley Community Endowment Fund, and the Smoky Valley Healthy Living Fund;

- \$1 of match for every \$4 of new gifts to all other endowed funds except for scholarship funds.

"There have been some requests we couldn't fulfill because of the lack of funds," said Roth, "including larger grant requests from Bethany Home and Broadway RFD, among many others. If we get accepted by Grow II, I think some of these requests will be definite possibilities in the future. It is another reason Grow II will be beneficial to the community."

Aiming to benefit the community is the basis of SVCF, and while portrayed largely through their actions, it is also signified through their logo: a rope.

"The rope symbolizes that as a community pulls together, it is much stronger than individuals doing things by themselves," Roth said.

Despite the immense work and preparation that lies ahead for SVCF, Roth keeps a particular reflection of hope in his mind to use as his driving force.

"A gift to the Foundation is a gift that gives forever."