

Bylaws for foundation okayed; will boost opportunities

and grow.

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Keeping a community alive and vibrant in today's competitive world is a big task.

Take for instance Crofton's neighbor, Bloomfield. In the past ten years, community leaders have successfully built a community center, library and just last year, opened a new medical facility with an onsite pharmacy.

But the community leaders will tell you they had lots of help and it did not happen overnight. Ten years ago the community of Bloomfield organized a community foundation fund with the help of Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) and the investment in their hometown is starting to show.

The NCF works with several communities across the state helping them build nest eggs and creating a culture of giving. It's a process for a city, village or a town - like growing up. Once the practice of giving by community residents is repeated a few times and watched by other residents, it becomes woven in the very life of the community.

"Remember, people will watch you to see what you are doing," said Doug Friedli, director of Community Fund Development in Eastern Nebraska, when he spoke to a group of about 15 Crofton volunteers back in March. Leaving a lasting impression will reap bountiful rewards he added, which will affect the lives which follow in years to come.

The mission statement for the NCF is: "The Nebraska Community Foundation partners with community leaders to inspire charitable giving, prudently manage financial resources and make strategic investments for the prosperity of our people and our communities."

In the years since, that mission statement has affected other Knox County communities - Niobrara, Verdigre, Wausa and Creighton. They have followed in Bloomfield's footsteps to create foundations.

Now, it is Crofton's turn.

As of August 10, the Crofton Community Foundation Fund (CCFF) approved the initial bylaws for its existence. Founding board members include: Allan Arens, Mick Reifenrath, Terry Mueller, Michael Guenther, De Carlson, Jim Murphy, Charlene Buschkamp and Doyle Stevens.

After six months of meeting with the NCF and as a founding committee, the members finalized bylaws and are ready to go public. The CCFF created their mission statement as follows: "To establish a financial base for the citizens of Crofton and the surrounding area so they can continue to have a prosperous community and strive to add to the betterment of the area."

It all boils down to keeping the legacy of the pioneer spirit which formed this northern Knox County rural community back in the 1800s strong. It's about passing that legacy down through generations into the future; making sure Crofton is still a strong community many years from now for our children's grandchild-

ren and beyond.

There are several opportunities for future growth for the Crofton fund. A Founders Club can be formed. Challenge grants can be created from other funding. Bequests are accepted as well as donor funds. Gifts of life insurance can be arranged also.

The CCFF will be starting a membership drive for a funders' club in the next few weeks. A yearly membership for the foundation is \$100 - a small price to pay for the rural atmosphere.

The fund has another goal as well. The committee members are committed to raising \$150,000 in the next two years. Surveys completed by NFC show these goals are very reasonable and Friedli hopes to see Crofton residents surpass any initial expectations.

The CCFF also becomes a vehicle for people to leave estate wealth to the city either through a donation or from a will. NCF estimates over the next five years an estimated \$107 million of Knox County wealth will be transferred to the next generation. The presence of a community fund will make it possible for the Knox County communities to capture some of that wealth.

Friedli recommended the CCFF have a conservative goal of capturing five cents of every dollar for the foundation. That would net approximately \$267,000 in Knox County for community endowment and betterment growth.

A few years ago, a Verdigre farmer wanted to give \$2 million to a rural community. No one

was set up with a foundation in his area so he donated part of the money to O'Neill and the rest to Norfolk. Friedli would prefer that didn't happen in Crofton.

Sometimes funding will come from outside of the community. There will be former residents or alumni who over the years have become very grateful for their small town upbringing and wish to give back. In most communities, alumni associations are a very active part of the fund. Often honored classes challenge each other from year to year.

Another goal of the CCFF is to be visible in the community and designate a project or two for the foundation to support and fund. It is only limited by the community's imagination. It will be a positive way to improve aging buildings or add new points of interest which will continue to keep Crofton a showplace for everyone who lives, visits or has left a piece of their heart here in northeast Nebraska.

If you are a believer in Crofton, enjoy the small town lifestyle, personal attention from the local businesses and the quality education your children receive in our local school district, maybe it's time to give back to that community.

When a committee member or volunteer knocks on the door, consider giving them a moment of your time and listen to all the good things which can come from this community project.

That's what will make the Crofton Community Foundation Fund tick ...