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It's a campaign, and so much more

BUTLER COUNTY AREA FOUNDATION FUND

Fund Advisory Committee

The volunteers of the BCAFF Fund Advisory Committee, we call it the FAC, wish you a Merry Christmas. That sentiment goes out to all who call Butler County home, whether they live here or they've moved to a new home. If you are home for the holidays, we hope you'll spend some time thinking about this column and our worthy cause.

It has been quite an eventful year. We spent half of it leading up to our public announcement in July of the Looking Forward - Giving Back Campaign. Chances are you've read about, visited our Facebook page or saw one of our thermometer posters around town. The short explanation is that the Sherwood Foundation has challenged us to raise \$200,000 for our unrestricted endowment by the end of 2018, and when we do, the Sherwood Foundation will make a gift of \$100,000.

Our FAC hosted the Husker Tailgate party, and a few diehards stuck around to see Big Red pull through against Purdue. It was a fun way to build awareness of our very important work. We held a photo contest and were amazed at some of the scenes that were entered.

As we've moved farther into the campaign and had some success, our discussions have changed. The campaign has already exceeded \$100,000 in pledges and gifts.

We have been humbled to talk to generous people who share our same confidence in the future of Butler County, from its smallest village to its county seat. During our discussions with our BCAFF supporters, we've found that people are eager to instantly grow their gift from \$1,000 to \$1,500, or \$500 to \$750.

We have told contributors about the exciting possibilities, when our unrestricted endowment gives volunteer leaders (our replacements, sooner or later) the potential to invest up to \$50,000 per year back into projects and programs that improve our county's quality of life. Even though we still have a long way to go to reach \$200,000, it's gratifying - and a little daunting - to think about how those funds could be used.

It is at this point that we realize what is really happening here. While we must necessarily talk about money, what would help Butler County even more is a movement, a tide of positive sentiment that builds on the county's strengths - for example our great schools, our health care and our agriculture and its related businesses, our arts and culture, even our advantageous location in eastern Nebraska. Ideally, BCAFF's endowment can make dreams come true.

You might wonder how our challenge got started. BCAFF is not alone in this work. In fact, before we qualified for the Sherwood Foundation challenge,

our FAC's readiness was assessed through Sherwood's partner, the Nebraska Community Foundation. Once accepted, we began peer level training with other community fund leaders - among them Nebraska City, McCook, Diller, and Columbus. Some have achieved all their goals while others are leading a campaign like ours. We have discovered that while every community is unique, there are common challenges that we face from one end of the state to the other.

What we learn from our peers we bring back to our campaign and our main focus: Butler County's future. There are numerous great causes that people here support, and the way we see it, the more that we support our own community the better.

Where BCAFF's stewardship comes in is the ability to respond to needs and opportunities of tomorrow that we don't even know about yet. It could be new technology at our schools or village and city offices. A lifesaving piece of equipment for our fire departments. Education for entrepreneurs and retiring business owners. Leadership courses for a new generation of village board members, school board members, chamber presidents and people who want to see good things happen.

It's no surprise that the Sherwood Foundation challenge has another term attached to it: Rural Development Philanthropy. Essentially,

it carries the philosophy that if our small towns and rural counties are going to thrive, not just survive, we must intentionally build on our strengths. Being stewards of a fund like BCAFF is just the start. Collaboration - not competition - within our communities is essential to development. Where can we invest to be the "rising tide that raises all ships?"

In the months ahead, we will be having more conversations with individuals and groups about the future. We'll ask more people for their gifts, large and small, to meet our goal. But we'll also be asking you to join the movement for a strong, bright future in Butler County.

We're wrapping up a great year for BCAFF and the community partners we work with. We expect 2018 to be even greater as we complete the Looking Forward-Giving Back Campaign, and we move toward a positive, strong future. If you see one of our FAC members, tell them how you'd like to help us make Butler County an even better place to live.

Campaign Committee members:

Mike Moravec, Fund Advisory Committee chairman, Larry Peirce, campaign chairman. Committee members: Milt and Janet Bemis, Kent Clymer, Diane Duren, Carol Fuxa, Amy Slama, Ed Siffring, Robin Sullivan, Lindsay Truksa.

Our Vision:

The Butler County Area Foundation Fund collaborates with other organizations to identify and support projects, programs, and people who are helping to build a community where our children can choose to live, work and raise their families.

Contact information:

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BCAFF is an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation.



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