

# the News-Times

## Recommendations

### 4 Blackford County evaluates community

By Kari Stump

Editor

[newstimes@insightbb.com](mailto:newstimes@insightbb.com)

Blackford County took its first step to improving the quality of life for residents at the *4 Blackford County* community planning meeting on Thursday, Sept. 15 at Lake Placid in Hartford City.

During the meeting, attendees broke into discussion groups to discuss the trends, ideas, concerns and needs of the community.

"Somehow in this county we need to develop some pride and community spirit," county commissioner Bob O'Rourke said. He said that driving around town, lack of pride could be seen in the upkeep of residential properties.

Blackford County Economic Development Director Mindy Kenworthy said she has to be careful about the route she takes when showing a prospective business a location.

According to Mayor Dennis Whitesell, the city mowed more than 50 yards this summer. While community pride is one concern, so is the attitude of citizens.

"We've got to get people to start caring and having a positive attitude," Mayor Whitesell said. "The community as a whole is very negative."

The committee hired Jim Dittoe, a facilitator from Winning Communities Inc., located in Carmel, Ind., to aid in the process of improving life in Blackford County. He has 30 years of economic development experience. Dittoe, along with *4 Blackford County*, will be utilizing Winning Communities' four-step plan, with the final step of implementation to begin in 2006.

At the next community meeting, taking place on Sept. 27 at Lake Placid, trends, assets, challenges and opportunities gathered from discussion groups will be reported. In addition, the group will begin the development of goals and measurable objectives and formulate action plans.

"This is the kind of opportunity we would like to see everyone in Blackford County take advantage of," said Mark Townsend, co-chair of *4 Blackford County*.