



Blackford County Receives \$50,000 Grant for Community Projects

Indiana Association of United Ways Matches Funds for Implementing County's Vision/Action Plan

Blackford County and Indianapolis, Indiana – March 8, 2006 — The 4Blackford County Task Force announced it has received a \$50,000 grant from the Indiana Association of United Ways for three programs to address community leadership, literacy, and image.

Earlier in the year, Blackford County citizens raised more than \$53,000 to begin implementation of the community's new vision and action plan, which was crafted by more than 200 Blackford County citizens and facilitated by Winning Communities Inc.

"The grant allows us to get a jump start on some of the goal areas within the plan, and to actually accomplish some of the things that are in the plan this year," said Ted Leas, President of Pacesetter Bank, co-chairman of the Winning Communities task force. "Otherwise it would have taken us a little longer to raise the necessary funds, so the grant put us way ahead of where we would have been."

The first of three projects includes a Blackford Leadership Academy. With a curriculum similar to other leadership programs around the state, Blackford County's leadership training program will begin in the fall of 2006 and will provide participants the opportunity to develop leadership skills and tackle community issues.

Blackford County's second project includes developing a "One Book – One Community" program to encourage family reading and learning as well as to increase academic expectations. The program will help develop life long learning opportunities for residents and will build upon the county's existing Community Alliances to Promote Education (CAPE) program.

The need for increased unity and pride within Blackford County led the community to develop a comprehensive image campaign. This campaign includes a new brand identity plan, a countywide unity committee to coordinate area festivals and associations, and community gateway signs to serve as an immediate and tangible symbol of Blackford County's progress. A series of 12 welcome displays, located along the boundaries of the county and entrances to the cities, will celebrate the community spirit, unity and commitment that have developed over the past six months in Blackford County.

"There is no question that we have several challenges ahead of us yet, but we have at least identified areas that we know need improvement and have volunteers that have stepped up to help," said Leas. "Some of the committees have already started to work, and we are really excited about the possibilities that lie ahead and the number of people that we have involved in the process."



Building and Achieving Your Community Vision

Any interested citizens in Blackford County that would like to volunteer for one of the Winning Communities goal area committees can contact the Hartford City Chamber of Commerce at 765-348-1905 for a sign-up form and more information about each committee. The seven identified goal areas for Blackford County include: countywide communications, community development, economic development, image and beautification, life long learning, recreation and leisure, and social service issues.

“What is most impressive about the Blackford County citizens is their drive and determination to achieve,” said Jim Dittoe, president of Winning Communities, Inc. “The grant and the matching dollars raised are just a prologue to the successes that this community has targeted, and its been my pleasure to be a partner with the people of Blackford County during this process.”

Blackford County funding partners for the Winning Communities vision and action planning process included: Blackford United Way, Blackford County Commissioners, City of Hartford City, City of Montpelier, Blackford County Community Foundation, Blackford County Economic Development Corporation, Pacesetters Bank, Montpelier Chamber of Commerce, Montpelier United Fund, Community First Bank & Trust, and Hartford City Chamber of Commerce. Groups participating in the task force include Hartford City Council, Montpelier City Council, Blackford County School Corporation, Blackford Federation of Teachers, Hartford City Chamber of Commerce, Blackford County Council, and the Montpelier Chamber of Commerce.

About Winning Communities:

Winning Communities is a community planning consulting company that has facilitated numerous community vision and action plans for cities, towns and counties throughout the United States. Jim Dittoe, President of Winning Communities, Inc. has been building community progress for more than 30 years, and has developed a unique certification program open to any county, city or town that seeks to create a vision and action plan for its future success. For more information about Winning Communities or the Certified Winning Communities program, contact Jim Dittoe at (317) 402-0524, email [jim @ winningcommunities.com](mailto:jim@winningcommunities.com) or visit www.winningcommunities.com.

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