

Rush County / Rushville, Indiana

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## **RUF and partners receive Lilly 4-Community Grant**

*Initial \$35,000 to be used for planning, identifying community needs*

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Rush County United Fund (RUF) has received welcome news as it look towards 2006; RUF leaders learned in late December that they, along with seven local contributing partners, have been named as recipients of the Lilly Endowment 4-Community grant. Totaling \$35,000, the money will be utilized to survey and identify this community's needs.

"We received the max amount of the grant possible, and it is a great thing for both RUF, the partners who have recently taken part in this process, and the future of our community," Pam Leisure, who has headed up the grant application process as RUF director, said.

The 4-Community Grant is a two-part process: the initial \$35,000 will be used as a planning grant and some of the funding will pay for consultant Jim Dittoe to collaborate with leaders and community members through meetings and forums to lay out a road map as to what is needed and wanted in Rushville.

After the conclusion of the planning process, RUF will be eligible to apply—with plans in hand—for the implementation part of the Lilly grant; those monies will be used to execute an impact project in Rush County.

"It will take approximately six months before we are ready to apply for the implementation grant," Leisure said. "So we will hopefully see more money coming into Rushville for the project that we decide on. Ultimately, it is very exciting for this community. With the help of Jim (Dittoe), we will likely have a better idea of what we need to make Rushville a better place for all residents. Once he begins the process of identifying needs, we will perhaps better understand what kind of positive impact this type of funding can have."

Dittoe, who has completed a dozen community planning projects since establishing his Winning Communities certification program, comes highly qualified for the job.

"The process of planning involves creating a shared vision, realistic goals, measurable objectives and an action plan. What do you do? Who's going to do it? How much is it going to cost? What's the timetable? Most communities don't have these kinds of things," Dittoe said, adding that there are specific challenges that arise in community development, even when funding is made available.

"I think participation is always a challenge, to get people in the community to get involved," he said.

Leisure noted that in June, Rush County will also be noted as a Winning Community at the state level, having gone through the planning process.

"This is very prestigious, and again offers the opportunity to apply for the implementation part of the Lilly Endowment grant," she said.

That part of the grant offers up to \$100,000; part of the criteria from Lilly states that those monies do not go into a big pool of money slated to be used on a project. Instead, they require that the full \$100,000 be used for a specific project in the community. (continued on page 2)

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Looking towards the coming weeks, Leisure said that she is hopeful that with guidance from Dittoe and input from the community, the grant will be used to its fullest potential.

“As we look towards the future of the community, I hope that residents who take part in voicing their concerns and opinions on the needs of Rushville realize they are playing a very integral role. They are planning for the future of the community and giving us a true assessment of what Rushville’s needs are.”

### Story Comments

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While on the surface, many may not fully grasp the concept of the 4Communities Grant process, those that have worked closely with it are excited about the opportunities it presents. It is a chance to see projects that otherwise might not have ever had a leg to stand on get that boost to become a reality. Lilly is famous for creating initiatives that A: Bring people and communities together towards a common goal, and B: like to see specific projects that (at the end of the day) they can "Hang their hat on". Several businesses and community agencies and entities are behind this, essentially putting their money where their mouth is, and I for one hope that people will further explore these opportunities before they begin their ridiculing, because in the end, Rushville is trying to do good things for it's future and the leaders of tomorrow, our youth.

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