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Community to celebrate Lilly grant

Funds to address pressing needs

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Arthur Spriggs, executive director of Shelby County United Fund for You (SCUFFY), invites the public to a celebration from 4 to 6 p.m. today at the Sanctuary of Shelbyville, 137 E. Washington St.

He plans to announce that the community is receiving a “4community” Impact Match Program grant from Lilly Endowment of \$75,000, but he also wants to take time to recognize four groups that collaborated to identify the most pressing needs in the county.



Spriggs

Although Spriggs is delighted that he can use today’s meeting to announce the good news that the community has been awarded the grant, he believes that the fact that the collaboration has taken place is reason enough to celebrate.

At the meeting, Spriggs will briefly outline the grant and explain how it will be used while interested citizens, community leaders and those who worked on the grant mingle together, munching hors d’oeuvres and patting each other on the back for a job well-done.

SCUFFY is a member of the Indiana Association of United Ways (IaUW), and Spriggs was able to find three groups in the community to pledge \$7,000, along with **SCUFFY**, to earn a \$35,000 planning grant from Lilly Endowment in the summer of 2005.

Major Hospital, The Blue River Community Foundation and the Shelby County Development Corp. joined with **SCUFFY** to form the 4Community Steering Committee that began meeting in October of last year.

Representatives from these groups and other leaders in the county then began the arduous task of narrowing down a list of concerns about Shelby County into a manageable project.

“You can’t fix everything,” Spriggs said, “but if you bring people together, you can accomplish so much.”

From a list of 20 items that different members of the committee felt were important, a couple of concerns seemed to keep showing up over and over, and most of them dealt with a need for bolstering Leadership Shelby County and addressing health needs for low-income people in the community.

“We saw high teen pregnancy and infant death rates, and too many babies in the county born with low birth weight from teen smoking. The suicide rate in Shelby County is off the charts, and many of the health problems were a result of people with low income and no insurance having no place to turn for help,” Spriggs said.

As the steering committee continued to mull the two problems, the idea originated for a project that would combine expanding LSC while addressing the county's health concerns at the same time.

The grant that was finally submitted to LaUW proposed using LSC students to investigate free health clinics in other areas with the view of combining the Shelby County Prenatal Care Clinic and the Shelby Health Clinic into one nonprofit organization. Grant money would be used to develop the board of LSC as well as provide scholarship money to pay the \$375 fee that students or their companies must pay before they may take the course.

"Leadership Shelby County often spends more than half of its time selecting a project which it usually doesn't have any money to fund. This is a way to build the LSC's numbers, make its board more effective, and the students will have a project to focus on from the beginning of the class," Spriggs said.

A task force is already busy rewriting the bylaws of the two clinics so that they can be combined into one by January of 2007, so the leadership class will do the research needed to determine the best physical setup for the combined clinics.

Currently, both clinics meet in Town Hall, at 54 W. Broadway St., in a small area unsuitable for its health care services. It is hoped that Major Hospital will provide a more professional space in one of its buildings by the time the clinics are totally reorganized and ready to move.

In order to receive the \$75,000 implementation grant, **SCUFFY** has to submit letters of intent from other groups in Shelby County showing that the match can be made. Spriggs is hopeful that the matching funds will be donated by Major Hospital, Blue River Community Foundation and the Sanctuary of Shelbyville.

"One reason that we wanted to get Sanctuary onboard," Spriggs said, "is that when it opens and begins providing shelter for abused women and their children, these families are probably going to need health services and are unlikely to have insurance."

Bringing attention to Sanctuary is another reason that Spriggs elected to hold the celebratory meeting at the proposed shelter.

"Some people in the community still don't know what the Sanctuary is all about or how it intends to operate. This is a chance for people to go inside and check it out," Spriggs said.

The scope of the Shelby County project is the beauty of it as far as Spriggs is concerned, but he said that when the grant was reviewed, the IaUW grant committee was somewhat concerned that the community was "biting off more than it could chew." Some United Way agencies submitted proposals for a single item — such as a new park or a day care center — but in the end, the reviewers agreed that the Shelby County proposal was the perfect example of the 4community concept at work.

"Our project will pull together the two clinics, build Leadership Shelby County and help Sanctuary at the same time. The steering committee was able to combine people from different groups and different perspectives from all over the county. This is what collaboration is all about," Spriggs said.