

Foundation aims to improve county

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ELLSWORTH COUNTY I-R

Since 2000, the Smoky Hills Charitable Foundation has distributed about \$94,000 in grants and scholarships.

Every community in Ellsworth County has benefited — from American Legion buildings at Holyrood, Wilson, Kanopolis and Ellsworth to the county's two school districts to projects undertaken by churches, the Ellsworth County Historical Society and numerous other organizations.

"Our purpose is to help Ellsworth County and the communities of Ellsworth County ... to make Ellsworth County a better place to live," said Judy Toman, foundation chairman. About two dozen residents

attended a meeting Oct. 21 in the basement of Ellsworth's J.H. Robbins Library to learn more about the foundation and its work.

Toman also announced the creation of a "Wish Book" for Ellsworth County organizations. The plan is to have it available in time for the holidays.

"People can play Santa, not just for your family, but for your community," Toman said.

The foundation was organized in 2000 as an affiliate of the Greater Salina Community Foundation. Toman said the partnership allows the Ellsworth County organization to have access to staff and other resources without the cost.

"It's much cheaper for us to be an affiliate ... It just works better," Toman said.

Patrick Hoffman, a foundation director, explained the types of funds within the foundation. He also spoke briefly about the tax deduction a donor receives from the establishment of a fund.

Contributions can include cash, land, stocks or other assets.

"We don't have to have this huge Bill Gates donation. Everyone has something they can contribute," he said.

Toman pointed to the scholarship funds aimed at Wilson students and the growth they have experienced over the past eight years.

This year, for instance, the foundation awarded \$7,700 to 15 students from the Eleanor Hunter Scholarship Fund and memorials for Geraldine L. Anschutz and Jack R. Janousek.

"We exist to help support you. We're here to make you the best you can be," Hoffman said.

"There's a lot of exciting, a lot of great things that happen if we start thinking about it."

He also explained the information non-profit organizations must supply to apply for a grant from the foundation's unrestricted funds. The grants are typically announced in March.

Applications and other information are available at the foundation website, www.smokyhillscf.org. Or from board members, who in addition to Toman and Hoffman, are Kimberly Gencur-Svaty, Alice Macek, Alice Peterka, Lloyd Sprick, Ashley Bohl, Vern Schepmann and Melvin Splitter.

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