

Foundations help make their communities better places to live and work

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If the importance of community foundations was ever in question, all concerns should have been laid to rest following a recent meeting on the future of Ellsworth's recreation sites and parks.

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comment on designs created by the Kansas City office of Bucher, Willis and Ratliff. The most telling moment of the meeting came when BWR designers asked about a so-called "dream site" for recreation. The majority of those at the meeting appeared to support a consolidation site — one with enough space for expansion.

Probably none of these comments would have been heard in a public forum if Ellsworth attorney Greg Hoffman had not requested the study, promising to pay for it with revenue from foundations he oversees. His goal is a more orderly approach to the future distribution of foundation monies, making sure they target projects the community wants and needs.

There has been no talk yet of how a new recreation complex — or the improvements to parks also outlined at the meeting — would be funded. But no doubt the foundations Hoffman represents would have a major role to play.

Which brings us to a story on the front page of today's Independent-Reporter.

According to a study done by Wichita State University economics professor Anne Gallagher on behalf of the Kansas Association of Community Foundations, a total of \$598 billion in Kansas wealth is expected to transfer from one generation to the next by 2058 and \$66 billion will transfer by 2020. In Ellsworth County, the numbers are \$925 million and \$109 million.

As staggering as those figures are, they become even more significant when you consider a good share of that wealth will not only transfer from one generation to another — much of it also will leave the county of its creation, taken away by children who moved away from their hometowns to find opportunity elsewhere.

Ellsworth County's Smoky Hills Charitable Foundation is working to retain a small portion of that wealth. If directors are successful, there is no end to the benefits their accomplishment will have for local communities. Income from foundation investments

will be available for projects, some of which might otherwise demand the expenditure of tax dollars.

If you have questions about the foundation or want to consider a contribution, call Judy Toman, (785) 472-3627. We can think of no better legacy to leave a hometown.

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