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HCCF receives \$150,000 grant to spark community development initiatives

GREENFIELD, Ind. (October 20, 2020) – The Hancock County Community Foundation received a Community Leadership Grant of \$150,000 as part of the seventh phase of Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT VII) initiative. With the grant, the community foundation will lead activities to create a unified vision and action plan for Hancock County. HCCF will engage public officials, employers, nonprofit leaders, and community members in idea generation and strategy sessions that will focus on quality of life planning. The grant will fund these initiatives plus upgrades that will bring collaborative design spaces into HCCF’s building.

HCCF is one of 84 foundations in Indiana receiving grants through this round of GIFT VII grantmaking. Lilly Endowment created GIFT in 1990 to help local communities in Indiana develop the philanthropic capacity to identify local needs and challenges. It launched GIFT VII in 2018 and made available a total of \$125 million to help foundations strengthen their leadership capacities in the towns, cities and counties they serve. Lilly Endowment expects to make additional GIFT VII grants in the coming months.

“This opportunity couldn’t have come at a more crucial juncture for our county,” said Mary Gibble, HCCF president and CEO. “We know our population is growing. Now is the time for our leaders and residents to come together and determine how we want our county to look tomorrow and for future generations.”

As part of GIFT VII, HCCF was also awarded an earlier planning grant of \$75,000 in 2019 to convene local stakeholders to identify, prioritize, and assess opportunities and challenges in Hancock County. In March 2020, HCCF was invited to apply for a GIFT VII Community Leadership Grant to implement strategies and activities identified during the planning period. HCCF’s Implementation Grant will gain further momentum from a board matching grant component that brings another \$200,000 to this initiative.

HCCF produced its successful concept proposal through a board and staff task force, the guidance of the Aspen Impact consulting team, and input from more than one hundred community members.

“We conducted interviews and field research with stakeholders across the county. We identified fundamental issues that we are excited to address for the long-term benefit of residents and employers,” said Gibble. “First, we noted the looming danger of our county becoming a casualty of sprawl. Our initiative is designed to instead make Hancock County a beacon of community. Quality of life principles must be central to decisions about our county’s future. Second, we found that residents and employers are disengaged from local governance. We will create opportunities for everyone to share concerns and desires. We will provide venues for conversation and idea generation that will bring tangible benefits to our hometowns.”

HCCF will execute two strategies to foster collaboration toward a unified county vision:

- Launch and lead a new venue called The Nest: A Birthplace for Ideas. The Nest will be a flexible space for visioning and educational sessions on community design.

- Launch and run a year-round Civic Circle for public officials. Expert practitioners will teach local governance concepts to new and incumbent elected and appointed civic leaders. In addition, HCCF will arrange social events to help these leaders build camaraderie and learn from each other's values and goals.

The first step HCCF will take in implementing this grant is to bring the Indiana Communities Institute (ICI) to Hancock County in November. ICI will guide local leaders through its intensive Indiana Community Development Course. Experts with decades of community development experience will teach seven sessions over two-and-a-half days, covering topics such as civic design, community engagement, and local economies. Participants will include elected and appointed officials plus business and civic leaders. This will be the first of several courses to whom HCCF will invite a diverse group of community members.

“We expect this course to stimulate thoughtful community development,” said Gible. “With Lilly Endowment’s Implementation Grant, we will apply innovative strategies and best practices that position our community to become ever more vibrant, engaged, and sustainable.”

HCCF provides philanthropic leadership by encouraging giving, learning, community pride and civic engagement. Working with caring individuals, families, and organizations to create or grow existing permanent endowment funds is critical to the organization’s mission. These funds generate income that is distributed in the form of grants and scholarships to enrich and enhance life in Hancock County, as well as support the donor’s favorite charitable causes, both at home and afar forever. HCCF has granted millions of dollars since their inception in 1992.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of [community development](#), [education](#) and [religion](#). The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. However, it maintains a special commitment to its founders’ hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.

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