

Grants Help Accomplish Greater Improvements in the Community by Candi Douthit

As a local grant writer, I want to take a moment to applaud and reiterate the incredible power of grant funding in our frontier community. In the past months, Cheyenne County has received two very generous awards from Dane G. Hansen Foundation, over and above the annual distribution of \$100,000. Cheyenne County Hospital was awarded \$42,800 and Cheyenne County Village was awarded \$50,000. Combined with local grant funds, we are able to accomplish much greater community improvements than would be possible otherwise. Although grant funding takes additional work now, the impact many times can take years to fully appreciate.

Cheyenne County Hospital has just completed a wonderful upgrade in our cold chain storage monitoring system. Through the generosity of a Dane G. Hansen Foundation grant, the hospital was able to purchase a facility-wide temperature monitoring system as well as upgrade the clinic generator. This may not seem overly important until one considers that medications, blood products, immunizations, testing agents, food and all sorts of other things in the hospital and clinics are dependent upon accurate temperature control. In years past, we lost thousands of dollars of medications in the pharmacy as the refrigerator quit and the old monitoring system didn't send an alarm. As the old system worsened, staff members would get multiple temperature alerts only to return to the facility, or drive to Bird City to find that the temperature was fine, the system had just sent another false alarm. In regard to the clinic generator, the county health nurse or maintenance would have to travel back to the facility when the power would go out, to start it and then return through whatever weather event to refill the fuel tank. This was highly dangerous for staff and truly not a safe system as the monitoring system became more unreliable.

The new temperature system monitors St. Francis and Bird City Clinics as well as hospital temperatures and sends alerts when things are out of range (no more 2am text alerts for no reason). When staff were asked about the system, comments included "this is a game-changer, no longer am I returning to the facility to check the equipment. Now, if I get an alert, I know something is going on and I need to check." For the generator, they are working to set up the system so it not only starts on its own when the power is out, but also texts county health and maintenance to let them know it's running and when it shuts off. As one staff member said, "No longer do I have to endanger myself to ensure the vaccinations are safe." Collectively, both systems not only create a higher level of safety for our clients and staff, but also work to decrease wasted hours and worry about whether things are functioning as they should during severe weather and power outages.

Cheyenne County Village (CCV) has just received an equally impactful grant, which will create the foundation for a community wellness destination. Dane G. Hansen Foundation provided \$50,000 to help install landscaping in the disturbed areas caused by construction

around the assisted living and the long term care facility. As the CCV construction project neared its end last fall, there was great concern that funds would remain to complete the landscaping. Instead of relying on local funds to finish the project, grant funds were pursued and \$63,975 was awarded to fund most of the basic landscaping. It would be easy to think, that's nice for those who live or work there. However, last year when the Cheyenne County Public Building Commission invited a group of locals to participate in a landscape committee, a greater vision was developed which ultimately will lead to a community walking trail, intergenerational living, and wellness opportunity.

The most impactful aspect of receiving these funds is that once phase one (basic landscaping) is accomplished, additional funding can be pursued from alternate sources to install a 5ft wide walking trail around the Cheyenne County Village Complex and connect to the roadside park (phase 2). If you ask any parent with children or loved one of a CCV resident...there is no walking trail that is continuous, safe, and can accommodate wheelchairs, strollers, and kids bikes/scooters in St. Francis. The vision is that a community walking trail can be incorporated around the village complex and link to existing resources to provide a place where residents can reach a target heart rate (and not because their child just went out in front of a car at the intersection). As the community is drawn for exercise, opportunities will be present for intergenerational living. As the CCV is across the highway, it feels a bit that our older residents are set apart from the community. By developing an outdoor recreation area for all, it is hoped that relationships can be maintained or rekindled throughout the lifespan. This is really important for physical and mental wellbeing. Phase three will be adding specialty landscape features such as a gazebo, pollinator garden, water feature, and play structure. Life in Cheyenne County consists of a lot of outdoor living and therefore, the dream is that even in the twilight years, life can be experienced out of doors and interacting with the community.

All of this detail to say, pursuing grant funds help significantly as we vision for the future. Without the grant funding from Dane G. Hansen, Cheyenne County Hansen Community Fund, and Cheyenne County Kansas Community Foundation, these improvements would not have been made. Budgets are tight everywhere and even necessary upgrades require financial planning and consideration of alternate funding sources. As a community, we are greatly indebted to our local foundations and the boards who execute their work. Thank you!