

Even 5 percent gift could help community

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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 Bob Muirhead is on a mission — a mission to get you to leave 5 percent of what you have in your will to your community.

Five percent doesn't sound like a lot, he says, but when you multiply that 5 percent by every person in Decatur County, you could end up with a big number — one that might result in a lot of money when invested.

The Kansas Association of Community Foundations says \$79 billion will be transferred from one generation to the next in the state of Kansas by 2020. The group would like to see 5 percent of that, or \$3.9 billion, preserved in community foundation endowments.

That's for the entire state of Kansas, said Mr. Muirhead, director of economic and community development for Midwest Energy in Hays, but the numbers for Decatur County are no less spectacular.

"In Decatur County," he said at a community meeting he held March 5 at the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center, "the estimated wealth is \$475 million,

and between 2010 and 2019, \$97 million of that will be transferred to the next generation. If 5 percent could be retained through gifts to the county, it would amount to almost \$5 million.

"A community foundation is just a collection of independent (money) and resources," he added, "and more often than not, it's made up of endowed gifts."

An endowed gift is one intended to be kept permanently while invested to provide income for a charitable organization or cause, says a pamphlet given out at the meeting from the Western Kansas Alliance of Community Foundations.

"The actual gift itself is never spent," the pamphlet says. "Instead, it remains intact for future principle growth. The earnings from the endowment are distributed to schools, local government agencies and nonprofit organizations according to the donor's wishes."

Donations can either be a one-time contribution to a specific cause or to create a new endowed fund, which would continue to generate interest over time for whatever the

donor chooses, in their name.

And on top of all that, donating to a foundation can result in a sweet tax break.

Ruth Miesner, treasurer of the Oberlin Business Alliance and the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, said that the tax benefits of donating differ for each person, depending on what bracket they are in, but they can be substantial.

Thirteen people came to the meeting, she said, including the county commissioners, Decatur County Hospital representatives and all of the candidates for City Council.

To donate, you can designate a community foundation as the beneficiary of your retirement account or life insurance policy, or add it to your will or estate plan.

And the good part about giving to a foundation, Mrs. Miesner said, is that you can specify where exactly you want the money to go. Many specific funds can exist within a single community foundation, so that if you want to donate only to, say, the swimming pool, or only to the high school, you can.

Education Foundation has helped for eight years

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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 One community foundation has operated quietly in Decatur County for some time.

The Decatur County Education Foundation has been around for about eight years, said board member Paul Shields, and in that time, it's grown to about \$700,000 in assets.

"We were looking for a way for people to raise money for scholarships and the school," he said, "and that's how it got started. We run a lot of scholarships through it."

"Individual families have donated money for scholarships, and the money goes to the Greater Salina Community Foundation (of which the foundation here is a part) and then returns here when we need it."

"There are two funds: a scholarship fund, and the ... education fund. We give out two scholarships per year to two graduating seniors, about \$250 each."

"The education fund is used for teachers who apply for our grants.

They apply every semester, and we target things for the teachers that the school board wouldn't or couldn't fund. We've done a lot of different things, like field trips, an iPad and library renovations."

Mr. Shields said that the group goes through the Salina Foundation because of the complexity and cost of running a foundation, including the amount of work involved in making sure people can deduct donations from their income at tax time.

"The (charitable tax deduction) part of it goes through the foundation in Salina, because we found out it takes a fair amount of work to get (a foundation) started and to run it," Mr. Shields said. "We had concerns about handling and investing that much money, and the time and people it would require, so we went through them to manage it."

Mr. Shields said that a former Oberlin resident, Col. Delbert Townsend, was the first donor to the foundation.

"Col. Townsend donated a con-

siderable amount before he died," Mr. Shields said. "He also has scholarships through Kansas State University, and he was looking for an avenue to do another one, so he was our first big donor."

"We get most of the money from alumni. Not all of it, but a lot. The rest is just people (who) know about it and have an interest in the school. Our target, when we send out letters, is the alumni, and we send them an annual report. So word gets out, I guess."

"We're always looking for new donors, and there's always the opportunity for people to start their own scholarship. We had a family that donated a fair amount to redo the high school library, so they set up a fund in their name to do that."

"We're trying to find ways of getting the word out. If someone doesn't know about us, it's kind of hard to give."

If you're interested in the foundation or want to donate, Mr. Shields said, call him at (785) 475-3450.

Development fund already here

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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 All of this talk about community foundations — where a resident can donate money to a project, that would then use the interest earned to pay for various projects and causes — has got some people asking: Wait a minute, don't we already do something like that with the Decatur Area Development Fund?

Ruth Miesner, treasurer of the Oberlin Business Alliance and the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, was at a meeting held here March 5 by Bob Muirhead, director of economic and community development for Midwest Energy in Hays, about community foundations. She said what some may not realize is that the "DAD" accounts, as they are known, are already a foundation that people can donate to for specific projects.

"Right now," said Mrs. Miesner, "the ... accounts have slightly less than \$50,000 in them. If we were

using these funds to their most efficient state, we'd have a couple of million dollars in there. And if we could do that, it gives us the opportunity for those funds to be more efficiently invested so that they grow even bigger returns."

Mrs. Miesner said she sent out letters to everyone who has donated money to the accounts to let them know the balances. So far, she said, everyone has responded by saying they weren't even aware the accounts still existed.

"Right now, we're trying to get the word out about legacy and estate planning," Mrs. Miesner said, "which is all about leaving behind money for your community in your name, that can then be used according to your wishes to ensure your legacy."

"It's highly likely that the accounts can be expanded to be the community foundation for the county. We've already spent the money to create it ... so if we are fortunate enough that the paperwork

is already done and the foundation already exists, then we need to learn how to use it and educate the community about it."

"It's all about legacy building and helping your community. It was quite a discussion. Most foundations are centrally operated; for example Hays and many others use the Greater Salina Community Foundation for administration.... The more dollars you can gather in one place, the bigger impact you can have and the bigger the returns you can see."

Those projects that have used money from the Decatur Area Development accounts include the new recreation and senior center downtown, Sappa Park and the swimming pool, Mrs. Miesner said. All donations to the funds should be tax deductible, and can be given through one-time donations, endowments, as part of your estate planning and many other ways.

Pool party gathering



OBERLIN POOL COMMITTEE members Rachel Johnson (left) and Susan May greeted people at a fund raiser Sunday night at the Sunflower Cinema. Behind them, committee members Valisha Raile (left) and Danielle Leitner helped with the food and drink. The event raised about \$2,700 for the new swimming pool, organizers said.
 — Herald photo by Erin May

County hires summer rec director

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Decatur County commissioners talked briefly about applications for the summer recreation director job at their meeting March 19.

County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said three people have applied. The recreation board has the applications, she said, and will make a recommendation to the commissioners about a director.

At their meeting March 26, the commissioners agreed to hire Dakota Soderlund for the job.

Ms. Geihlsler said Jeff Younger with Seminole Energy called about

locking in natural gas prices from November through next March. He suggested the commissioners wait.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved the purchase of a box for the weed-control pickup

at \$500.

- Talked with Sheriff Ken Badsky about a question on sick leave for one of his employees.

- Asked the sheriff to pick up the Center Township books from the former treasurer, which had been requested, but not yet turned in.

Reception planned for artist

An exhibit reception will honor artist Jennifer Higerd from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturday at the Prairie Museum of Art and History in Colby.

She has deep roots in northwest Kansas as a native of Gem, a high

school teacher in Colby and an instructor at Fort Hays State University. Now an art teacher in Missouri, she recently opened her "The Roots Run Deep" exhibit at the museum.

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The 60th Annual Meeting of the Decatur Cooperative Association

Oberlin Gateway Civic Center
 Tuesday, April 30th, 2013

- 6:30 PM – Meal
- 7:30 PM – Business Meeting
 - Audit Report
 - Election of Directors*
 - Manager's Report
 - Chairman's Report

*Director terms expiring are Gerald Benda and Paul Nauer. Both will be retiring from the board. The floor will be open for nominations at the meeting. Financial Statements will be provided at the meeting for year ending, January 31, 2013

Sincerely,
 Chris Bailey, Chairman