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Foundations Sponsor West Central Regional Forums

Greencastle, IN – January 24, 2008 Communication, coordination, and collaboration were words frequently used last week at the West Central Indiana Regional Development Forum sponsored by the Putnam County Community Foundation. The Forum, held on January 16, 2008 at the Walden Inn in Greencastle, built upon the work begun at a previous meeting hosted by Indiana Humanities Council and the Parke County Community Foundation on December 4, 2007 at Turkey Run State Park. In December, participants learned about services and funding opportunities available from various offices in Indiana State government.

Participants learned that there are many examples of cooperative success in Indiana – both in larger metro areas and in smaller rural areas, i.e. BOSS program, Regional Development Authorities in Evansville, Hammond, and Michigan City. Participants also learned there are many state resources currently. For example the Office of Community and Rural Affairs has awarded grants to other regions in the state in the areas discussed, i.e. venture capital, entrepreneurialism, etc. Other regions in Indiana have received a greater share of state funding recently. A recurring theme in discussions was the need for a regional coordinating, communicating, marketing entity.

Participants from Parke, Putnam, Fountain, and Vermillion Counties prioritized five areas for potential collaboration and identified tasks to be accomplished in each area. A coordinator was identified for each work group, with the responsibility of leading the team to gather additional information and ideas and bringing information to the next regional forum to be hosted by the Vermillion County Community Foundation and the Western Indiana Community Foundation. Contact your Community Foundation to find out more and to get involved.

The priority areas, coordinators, and contact information are listed below:

1. Support and strengthen existing businesses in the region -- Sharon Negele, City of Attica, clerk@tctc.com
2. Increase new business in the region – Kristin Clary, Parke County Economic Development, parkecountyedo@sbcglobal.net.
3. Encourage and support entrepreneurialism in the region – Toni Tomlinson, Knoy Resource Center, Cloverdale, knoy@cloverdale.k12.in.us.
4. Increase workforce skills in the region – Jim Meece, Parke County Commissioner, jimmeece@cebridge.net.
5. Increase connectedness in the region, i.e. cell phone coverage, broadband, roads, rail, etc. – Janet Whittington, Southeast Fountain Community Foundation, jkwhitt@bloomingdaletel.com.

At the meeting's conclusion, Andrew Lee, Director of Leadership from the Indiana Humanities Council stated, "Cooperation will make us louder and stronger and increase the likelihood of our having success. Regional communication and cooperation is not about bailing each other out – it is about walking together in lock step, about working together and achieving more."

The Putnam County Community Foundation is a nonprofit public charity established in 1985 to administer funds established by donors, award grants, and provide leadership, enriching the quality of life and strengthening community in Putnam County. Contact the Putnam County Community Foundation, 2 South Jackson Street, Greencastle, IN 46135. www.pcfoundation.org, 866.653.4978.