

2001 Annual Report Executive Summary

The Town of Austin Enterprise Community

The year of 2001 was certainly an exciting one for the AREC. With the addition of two board members and three staff members, the AREC has continued to grow. Several projects were undertaken, and plans for many more are underway. The first AREC Austin Pride Award was granted in June to recognize pride taken in property in the AREC zone. This award continued, naming one winner each month.

Other beautification efforts occurred, including the landscaping in front of the AREC office during the annual Day of Caring. The AREC provided partial financing for holiday perimeter lighting, an Austin Beautification Committee project. Other projects, like the construction of two new homes in conjunction with USDA, and New Hope Services also became realities. These homes, along with three others, are part of the Down Payment Assistance Program now offered to Austin residents wishing to purchase homes. For those residents who already own homes, our Housing Rehab Program made it possible to renovate and modernize qualified homes in the AREC zone.

Through the addition of the Revolving Loan fund Program now offered by the AREC, expansion of an Austin daycare and the purchase of a new fire and rescue truck were made possible. In the area of health care, the AREC has really been busy this year. The Austin Rural Health Clinic was opened in March, through a partnership of the Scott county Health Department, Dr. Kevin Rogers, M.D., and the AREC. In addition to the Health Clinic, the AREC also sponsored the first annual Austin Health Fair Celebration on August 25. This event, which attracted over 1400 people, was a huge success offering health screenings and other information.

In looking to 2002, the AREC is excited about continuing the programs we offered in 2001, and looking forward to several new programs throughout 2002. As Board President, I encourage each of you to join with us in serving Austin and the AREC. For those who already assist in so many ways, Thank You!

Berley Goodin, President. As you can see from our President's message, FY 2001 was truly very busy for the Austin Rural Enterprise Community. Serving a community of approximately 4400, the AREC board, committees and staff are dedicated to improving the overall quality of life for our residents.

Programs undertaken in FY 2001 include everything from health care and housing to economic and community development, and we can never forget about our educational programs. Our accomplishments have been cherished as we continue to grow and serve our residents. At this point I wish to offer some of our most highlighted accomplishments during the past year, please keep in mind however, that even the smallest service to our community is a great accomplishment for our organization. Austin Rural Health Clinic The need for health Care services (Benchmark # 18) within Austin was highly discussed by Austin residents during the Strategic Planning phase for the Austin Rural Enterprise Community, and is documented throughout the AREC Strategic Plan. In addition, documentation has been provided by the Austin Town Council, Scott County Health Department, Scott Memorial Hospital, Dr. Kevin Rogers and Dr. John Croasdell verifying that Scott County is a medically underserved area (MUA) and a health professional shortage area (HPSA), with Austin receiving Physician services equivalent to 1.5 FTE's. Austin is a rural community; many residents are intimidated by larger medical community surroundings, rotation of medical staffs, and higher cost services. Our residents also experience transportation issues, even though services may be available only a few miles away. Insurance and affordability are always a problem. Each month residents must choose between food and shelter or purchasing much needed medications. Visits to the Doctor are usually on a "must or emergency" basis and are often through higher cost avenues such as local emergency rooms. The lack of rural clinic services within Austin was very obvious to the AREC Board of Directors. In an attempt to meet this imperative need for our residents, the AREC Board of Directors approved a mini-grant to

the Scott County Health Department for the establishment of the Austin Rural Health Clinic and provides space rent free to the clinic. A partnership exists between the Scott County health Department and the Scott Memorial Hospital for provision of ancillary services (x-ray, lab, etc.). Through this grant, services began in March 2001 providing eight (8) clinic hours per week. This only scratches the surface. Within the first month, the Scott County Health Department and ARH Clinic staff realized the need for additional hours of operation. AREC has provided funding spread over a two (2) year period, but without additional resources, cannot obligate to full funding for this clinic based on twenty-four (24) hours of operation per week. Residents of the AREC zone are the primary beneficiaries for the Austin Rural Health Clinic. Specifically, families who are uninsured or underinsured will be targeted through the Scott County Health Department and the Austin Rural Health Clinic Staff for priority services. Additional patients who reside in Austin and have adequate insurance coverage or residents who live within Scott County at-large will receive services on a secondary basis. Services will always be available to AREC residents, but by offering services as scheduling permits to Scott County residents at-large, some revenue may be generated by the Clinic to offset costs associated with providing free or reduced care to Austin residents. Austin Rural Health Fair Celebration What began as a simple health fair (Benchmark # 31) to provide medical screenings and draw attention to the Austin Rural Health Clinic, quickly evolved into a large Community Celebration of Health.

As a joint project between the AREC, Scott County Health Department and Scott Memorial Hospital, the event was held on Saturday, August 25th and featured a wide variety of free and low cost health screenings as well as displays from over 75 health/social service providers and many state and local emergency service organizations. The celebration was originally scheduled for the Austin Elementary School cafeteria, but due to the enormous amount of provider participation and local community interest, we actually filled not only the cafeteria, but also the High School Gymnasium and all paved surface areas in front of the Elementary School. Serving in excess of 1400 residents between 9am and 2 pm, the exhibitors provided screenings from blood pressure and cholesterol to pediatric eye exams and athletic physicals. The Red Cross Blood Mobile was on hand along with the City of Columbus, Indiana's Fire Safety Burn Trailer for children. Other highlights included the local fire and ambulance equipment and all levels of local and state police units who provided identification kits for children and seat belt and car seat safety checks for all ages. And for fun, we provided local entertainment for all to enjoy! The day was long, and the AREC staff spent many weeks planning for a smooth operation, but when the day was complete, the only question or comment was "have you set the date for next year, and be sure to include our group on your mailing list." What a joyous feeling to know we reached so many of our residents in a positive manner. Austin AREC Pride Award this program was designed to recognize Austin homeowners who demonstrate true pride their properties and community in order to meet our Strategic Plan goals under Benchmark # 7.

A real problem in our community is that many homeowners and renters tend to have large discarded items and trash in the yard or on their front porch, and very often we have counted as many as twelve junk cars sitting in the yard. To assist the Town with cleanup efforts, the AREC established the Pride Award Program. Each month the AREC Board of Directors identifies one property to be recognized during the regular AREC Board Meeting and whose property displays the AREC Austin Pride Award sign in their front yard for the following 45 days. The Austin Beautification Committee submits monthly nominees to a subcommittee from the AREC Housing and Beautification Committee for consideration with AREC Board approval of the winners. The first award was presented in June, with a total of seven awards in all for FY 2000. On Monday, January 14, 2002, over seventy people gathered in the park building to pay gratitude to the winners for FY 2000. Guests were served by the AREC staff and received recognition and small rose bushes for their yards. AREC Housing Rehabilitation Program The Austin Rural Enterprise Community mission statement focuses on promoting and improving quality of life for AREC residents. In meeting this mission, AREC completed our first homeowner rehabilitation project in December, which included five Austin homes. Funds under this project were

generated under the Indiana Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) and used for income eligible families needing minor to moderate repair assistance. Another Austin home received rehabilitation assistance using EC funds. Total funds used for homeowner rehabilitation through FY 2001 were \$75,650.00. The AREC plans to begin the second project in February 2002. Down-Payment Housing Assistance The Austin Rural Enterprise Community offers down payment assistance to income eligible families desiring to purchase a home within the Austin EC zone boundaries. Eligibility is based upon family size, annual household income, and credit history of the applicants. The eligible amount of assistance is determined by the “gap” need between loan commitments and purchase price of the home. Total funds used for down payment assistance in FY 2001 were \$28,350.00.

Scholarship Programs: This year, the Austin Rural Enterprise Community awarded two hundred dollar scholarships to seven deserving seniors at Austin High School. With certificates bestowed upon them at the annual Awards Day Ceremony, the seniors were acknowledged publicly on the morning of May 24, 2001. Executive Director, Charlotte Mathis, was on hand to personally congratulate each and every one of the recipients. Among other qualifications, applicants for the AREC Scholarship must have been graduating seniors of Austin High School, planning to attend a Post Secondary School. A minimum 2.5 grade-point average was required along with a certified transcript of grades and a Letter of Recommendation from a Teacher or Counselor. On August 9, 2001, the AREC Board of Directors announced the two winners of the Non-Traditional Scholarship or Returning Student Scholarship Program. Applicant for the \$500 scholarships submitted a high school diploma or GED, two letters of recommendation, and a five hundred word essay on why he or she desired the scholarship, how supporting him or her would benefit Austin, and how he or she intends to give back to the community after graduation. **Teacher Mini-Grants:** The AREC Board of Directors provided \$3,600 total for Teachers of Scott County School District No. 1 for use to enhance existing resources for classrooms, offer additional activities to students, and /or to purchase specific equipment for classroom use.

Thirteen grants were submitted for consideration, with eight being funded. **Revolving Loan Fund Program** the AREC Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program offers low-interest loans to employers of 50 or fewer employees seeking to create or expand job opportunities within the AREC zone area. Loans may be used for acquisitions or improvement of land or buildings; equipment; and/or working capital. In FY 2001, the AREC made two loans totaling \$95,500.00 to zone entities.

Public Participation is vital to the success of AREC. Our monthly board meetings are held at 7PM on Thursday evenings to allow maximum community attendance, with notices of the meetings in the local newspaper, on cable access channel, radio announcements and through the bi-monthly AREC newsletter. Our organization held the FY 2001 Annual Corporation Meeting on January 10th and our Annual Public Hearing to begin the Strategic Plan Review and Amendment was held on November 29th. During the Town of Austin monthly meetings, the AREC has the opportunity to provide a monthly update on activities and provide additional information for residents. The Austin Rural Enterprise Community consists of a nine member Board of Directors, five standing committees covering health care, education, economic and workforce development, housing and beautification and community development, which met on a monthly basis. In addition, we have two finance committees for review of our economic development RLF funds and housing program funds. Our Board consists of three elected officials (2 from Austin and 1 from Scottsburg) along with one Austin resident meeting the definition of low-income using the HUD Guidelines.

Recruitment for committee involvement reaches into the very heart of our community – we look for individuals who are in need of assistance, those who provide assistance through their normal walks of life, and others who have helped in some capacity through previous employment or experiences. We have a good blend of educational levels on all committees, with AREC Board members serving as Chair and Co-chair for each of the five standing committees. Our loan review committees are made up of one AREC Board Member and additional Austin residents – many of which meet the low-income definition.

Overall, we have in excess of 85 local residents and volunteers who participate in either the board or committee level for our organization.

Special events such as the Austin Rural Health Fair Celebration brought an additional 75 volunteers from our community, and all events such as Austin Street Fair and Courtfest bring numerous volunteers to assist with AREC activities. It is our belief that Austin residents are truly more involved now with the AREC and our Strategic Plan than during the initial planning project. At that time, much of the true commitment to our Strategic Plan came from non-Austin residents.