

## **2000 Annual Report Executive Summary**

### **Clare County Enterprise Community**

Clare County Enterprise Community (CCEC) began the year by hiring an executive director to lead the activities of the group. This was accomplished by a partnership between the CCEC Board of Directors and Michigan State University Extension (MSUE). It was agreed, that if in fact, Clare County did receive designation as an enterprise community, MSUE would hire a Community and Economic Development Agent who would be assigned as CCEC's Executive Director. Edward Kerr began his duties as executive director January 5, 2000. On January CCEC Board of Directors held their annual meeting, elected citizens to open board seats, established terms, and elected the executive committee as prescribed in the CCEC By-laws.

Much of January and February was spent reviewing the benchmarks of the strategic plan and meeting with both committed and potential partners and/or benchmark leaders. Kerr participated in VISTA supervisors training, as three VISTA positions had already been earmarked for the project.

It is significant to note that during February, CCEC established a relationship with the Clare County Planning Commission. CCPC was in the process of preparing a county- wide recreation plan for the first time ever. This plan would address benchmark #5.1 of the CCEC strategic plan. The project was completed with the assistance of Saginaw Bay Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc., and adopted by the Clare County Board of Commissioners December 5, 2000.

In March, training was made available to new CCEC Board Members and others who were interested in learning about the Empowerment Concept and the components of the CCEC strategic plan. CCEC collaborated with thirteen partners of the Clare County Human Services Coordinating Body to prepare and forward a 21st Century Learning Grant to the Federal Government. The City of Harrison, with the support of CCEC, submitted a grant/loan application in the amount of \$4,135,000 to USDA Rural Development to upgrade the city's water system. It was announced in July that this project would be funded, which made a great impact on benchmark #11.2.

During the month of April, CCEC dedicated its efforts to learning how to obligate and draw down the necessary funds to address the prioritized benchmarks of the strategic plan. A number of meetings were held with established and potential partners. After the appointment of an add-hoc housing committee in February, housing issues became a major focus of CCEC. Housing issues represent twelve of fifty-two benchmarks in the strategic plan.

During the month of May, the CCEC continued its work on the Housing Initiative. A partnership between MSU Extension - East Central Region, Clare County Habitat for Humanity and Clare County Enterprise Community was established. This partnership will provide the funding to hire a housing advocate to address benchmark #18.7. Secondly, the Clare County Continuum of Care Committee held its organizational meeting. More than 25 partners including Federal, State and Local agencies attended that meeting. It was learned that Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems, a CCEC partner, received a \$95,000 RBEG grant to assist CCEC with a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a Community Farmers' Market in Clare County addressing benchmark #12.2. The Clare County Planning Commission held its first public hearing on the proposed Clare County Recreation Plan to gather public input about the plan.

On June 26, a very powerful meeting took place between several Midland based foundations: the Clare County Community Foundation, Clare County Enterprise Community and several partners of the Youth

@ Risk work group of the Clare County Human Services Coordination Body.

Through various requests for funds to address the needs of the youth in Clare County, a group of Midland based foundations developed an interest in possibly establishing a long range funding plan to help address these challenges. The option that seemed to be the most viable was that of an endowment to the Clare County Community Foundation, allowing program decisions to be made locally. Follow up communications are taking place to bring this project to fruition. CCEC took advantage of available training by participation in both 4th Annual Rural Community Development National Training Conference, and the 6th Annual White House Empowerment Conference. Good news came to CCEC partners this month as Clare County Volunteer Center received a \$25,000 challenge grant from the Michigan Community Services Commission (benchmark #10.1), and Mid Michigan Industries – Hard Times Café received \$99,900 REBG from USDA to be used to purchase a building to house their proposed automotive repair business (benchmark #13.2). The Farmers' Market steering and executive committees were busy developing and administering a consumer's survey. They decided to gather information representing various populations who were perceived to be potential customers of a Farmers' Market. Surveys were taken at the Clare County Fair, John Mackie Rest Area (second busiest in Michigan located at the intersection of US10/US27), and Jay's Sporting Goods (a large retail sports outlet). Both the rest area and sporting goods store are located within about one mile of what was considered to be a potential site for the Farmers' Market.

Middle Michigan Development Corporation was busy during the month of July representing the economic development and marketing interests of Clare County. Since the partnership with MMDC has been established, both private and public entities have been able to take advantage of their marketing expertise. Two industrial parks have been developed: one publicly owned, and one privately owned. A third, high-tech park, is in the application stage with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. The partnership with MMDC is in response to benchmark #11.5, the development of a county wide economic development organization. The Human Services Coordinating Body heard a presentation from the Regional Food Distribution Center of the Red Cross, regarding the concept of a Mobile Food Pantry. During the presentation, it was emphasized that the funds for this project had come from USDA Rural Development because of Clare County's designation as a Round II Rural Enterprise Community. After the presentation, a work group was formed by Clare County Family Independence Agency, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency and Clare County Enterprise Community to develop a plan so the citizens of Clare County could take advantage this program. July also brought good fortune to the City of Harrison, located within Clare County Enterprise Community. Donald Hare, State Director-USDA, announced that the City of Harrison would be receiving a \$1.7 million loan and a \$2.4 grant to upgrade the City's water system, addressing benchmark #11.2 of the CCEC strategic plan.

It was learned that Jim Jacobs, USDA Desk Officer serving Clare County, was planning a visit to Clare County Enterprise Community during the month of August. Arrangements were made so he could attend the monthly meeting of the CCEC Board of Directors, as well as, visit with various partners and benchmark leaders. Both CCEC board members and citizens viewed the visit very positively, confirming that "Washington" really cared what was happening in Clare County, Michigan.

During the month of September, the organizational meeting and first regular meeting of the Clare County Arts/Cultural were held. A good response to the publicity campaign from the community brought many interested people together. Mid Michigan Community College agreed to be benchmark leader, and assigned staff member and CCEC Treasurer, Barbara Richards, to this project. During the next three months, the group continued to operate at a rapid pace. They applied for and received a Rural Rider Grant to support technical assistance. In addition, they received a grant for organizational expenses from the Clare County Community Foundation. The Arts/Cultural Council is currently in the process of establishing itself as a non-profit organization. The group hopes to sponsor its first activities

late in the spring of 2001. The hard work of this group represents significant progress toward benchmarks #6.1 & #6.2. CCEC became aware of a possible funding opportunity with the Hewlett Packard Corporation to help address the digital divide that exists in rural America. A group of potential partners was assembled to discuss a possible grant application. Work groups were formed to explore the challenges faced by various groups within our community created by the lack of technology. It was also decided to contact HP to request technical assistance in the preparation of the grant. Several citizens representing the Clare County Planning Commission, Farmers' Market Steering Committee, Clare County Board of Commissioners and Clare County Enterprise Community participated in a five-day; three state Farmland Preservation Tour to study wise land use practices. This activity was coordinated in conjunction with benchmark #1.1 (produce a coordinated land use plan).

Because of the many funding opportunities that are emerging regarding the narrowing of the digital divide, the CCEC Board of Directors at their October meeting adopted a resolution to develop a broad technology benchmark to help Clare County to meet this challenge. It also endorsed the preparation of the HP grant opportunity, attempting to get Clare County designated as a "Digital Village". The CCEC add-hoc committee, working on the Continuum of Care Plan for the county, attended training led by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Edward Kerr, Executive Director-CCEC traveled to Indian River, Michigan along with local school officials to learn about the potential use of Qualified Zone Academy Bonds. At this writing, it appears that one of the local school districts might be able to utilize this program to complete a sorely needed remodeling project.

The second and third public hearings of the County-Wide Recreation Plan took place November 2nd and 7th. November 9th the Clare County Planning Commission met to review the comments heard during the public hearings and make the necessary changes before presenting the plan to the Clare County Board of Commissioners for adoption. CCEC committees were very busy. The Farmers' Market Committee was busy with the feasibility study, the Arts/Cultural Council was busy with such organizational details as names, mission statements and the like, and the EC ad-hoc housing committee was busy with the preparation of the Continuum of Care plan.

December 4th and 5th, Executive Director Kerr traveled to Washington, D. C., to both present and participate at the Health Planning for EZ/EC Community Development workshop, sponsored by DHHS and planned by Howard University. It was learned that MMDC is working with the Clare Downtown Development Authority to help a firm expand. This will create several additional jobs in our area, further addressing benchmark #11.5. The Clare County Board of Commissioners adopted the first County-wide Recreation Plan ever in the history of the county on December 5, 2000. This drew front-page attention from the area newspapers and gave both the Clare County Planning Commission and the CCEC Board of Directors a real sense of accomplishment to end the year 2000.

All in all, everyone feels good about the year 2000, and the progress that was made addressing the benchmarks outlined in the strategic plan. Many partnerships were established which will help to support the continued good work of Clare County Enterprise Community in the year 2001 and beyond.