

2002 Annual Report Executive Summary

Clare County Enterprise Community

January began with the Clare County Enterprise Community Annual Board of Directors Meeting including nominations and election of new board members. Six new members brought new ideas and support for the ongoing initiatives. BM #12.2 which speaks to the establishment of a Community Farmers' Market presented several challenges. The start-up board had many tasks ahead of it. The first was the examination of the pros and cons of becoming a 501 c (3) non-profit corporation. Because there had been much discussion about this group forming a coop, the services of legal counsel specializing in coop law was secured to assist the start-up board with their research. Several grants had been submitted or were being prepared for submission to secure start up capital and to fund the position of market master. Up to this point, the start up board had partnered with Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS) to serve as the grant applicant. When it was decided to make application to the Kellogg Foundation, it was necessary to secure another partner as MIFFS was already the recipient of a Kellogg Grant. After a discussion with Michigan Agricultural Stewardship Association (MASA) they became the grant applicant on behalf of the start up board. The start up board and extension staff were offered coop business training by the Michigan Alliance of Cooperatives. This was available at no cost due to a USDA grant.

The person who had been hired to serve as CCEC housing advocate to address the tasks of BM #18.7 was introduced to the community and the board. BM #18.8 which created the Clare County Continuum of Committee continues to address the needs of the homeless. The CCCofC, with other partners from housing community, applied for \$37,000 in grant funding to provide essential services to the homeless. Discussions regarding the challenge of bringing high speed, wide band Internet access to Clare County were taking place with two other counties (potential partners) regarding the feasibility of submitting a grant to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to secure funding to complete a study and develop a plan to address CCEC needs as outlined in BM #22.

At the February meeting of CCEC Board of Directors, officers were elected for the coming year and meeting dates, times, and locations were established. Addressing the challenges of BM #12.2 was still being tackled by the Farmers' Market start up board. A potential site, a former township park, appeared to be the best location found to date. The township board was willing to consider the possibility, but requested that a wet lands delineation study be conducted to see how much of the 15 acre site was suitable for development. An engineering/consultation firm was hired to complete the study. The potential partners assembled to address BM #22 (technology), grew to 10 counties, a utility company and 3 workforce development boards. MEDC had announced late last year they would be launching a technology initiative entitled LinkMichigan. It was decided that the partners would become a consortium and submit a grant to help bring technology to rural Michigan. The housing advocate hired under BM #18.8 planned and hosted a county wide meeting of realtors and resource agencies to address the issue of affordable housing.

The Clare County Character Counts! Coalition, organized as a work group of BM #14.1., discussed participation in local events to gain recognition and support within the community. At the March Board meeting it was decided that a by-laws review committee should be appointed to review the group's operating procedures and recommend any changes they might deem necessary. The Clare County Character Counts! Coalition participated in the local St. Patrick's Day parade and caught the eye of the local media, while passing out literature and pencils to the children along the parade route. The CCEC Board of Directors has chosen the concept of Character Counts! as the tool to address BM #14.1 (diversity). The Clare County Board of Commissioners appointed a study committee to determine the feasibility of establishing a County-wide recreation commission. During years one and two of the Enterprise Designation, a county-wide recreation plan was written and submitted to the State of Michigan for approval. The recreation plan was completed as a task under BM # 5.1 and recommended the establishment of a recreation commission.

After two unsuccessful attempts to fund an assisted living facility for seniors (BM #18.10) it was decided to call on the services a professional consultant who specializes in the area of assisted living. One more county joined the LinkMichigan Consortium (BM #22), increasing the membership to 11 counties. In early April, after reviewing the wet lands delineation study completed on the possible site for the Community Farmers' Market, it was determined that the site was not suitable for the project; the search for a site continues. The LinkMichigan Consortium (BM #22) grows to 12 counties. Consumers Energy (local utility company) and Michigan Works! (local workforce

development board) provide funding assistance so the cash match from each county will be less than \$6,000. The by-laws review committee makes recommendations for minor changes to document which are accepted by the board. With the assistance of Michigan State University Extension, Clare County is making significant progress on a county-wide land use plan (BM #1.1).

The most significant activity for the month of May was the signing of the Grant Agreement for years 3 & 4. Even though the Enterprise Designation is for a ten year period, there is always the concern of whether the Legislature will authorize the continued funding. The EC Board decided to extend BM #5.1 for years 3 & 4 and to obligate an additional \$10,000 to help support a county-wide parks and recreation commission. The EC Board requested that an EC Board member be appointed to the commission. Hard Times Café, a partner organization, was able to secure a repossessed USDA-RD single family home to use as a transitional home for the homeless. This will help to further address BM #18.8. USDA-RD personnel offered their assistance with the task of securing the funding so a feasibility study could be completed in support of BM #18.10 (assisted living). CCEC personnel requested that the Clare County Board of Commissioners financially support the participation of Clare County in the LinkMichigan initiative. The response was positive.

At the June Board meeting, the CCEC board decided to support the Arts Council for a third year (BM's # 6.1/6.2). Mid Michigan Community College continues to be the benchmark leader for the Arts Council; however, a new champion will need to be named due to the retirement of the current champion. The Continuum of Care Committee (BM #18.8) had a busy month. First, they hosted a housing summit and secondly, raised matching funds to support the Homeless Prevention Endowment Fund of the Clare County Community Foundation. MEDC notified the LinkMichigan consortium (BM #22), now called the Heart of Michigan Planning Group, that their Letter of Intent to participate in the grant process was accepted, and invited them to submit a grant application. The Farmers' Market (BM #12.2) start up board has had no success at finding a suitable site for purchase, so they are looking for a site for which they can secure a long term lease.

July 03-Clare County Enterprise Community Board of Directors presented Americorps volunteer Tara Stanley a "Resolution of Appreciation" for her dedication to technology in the Mid Michigan area and for helping address BM #22. Clare County Board of Commissioners authorized their chair and clerk to sign an inter-local governmental agreement with 12 other counties to participate fully in the LinkMichigan initiative. With Mid Michigan Community College continuing as the benchmark leader for BMs #6.1/6.2, the new officers of the Clare County Arts Council were announced to CCEC Board of Directors. Chair of the Clare County Planning Commission reported that a partnership has been formed with the East Central Michigan Regional Planning Commission to assist with the preparation of the county-wide land use plan described in BM #1.1. The recently formed Clare County Parks and Recreation Commission partnered with Michigan State University Parks and Recreation Department to hire the county's first Parks and Recreation Director, further advancing BM # 5.1. Reviewing the strategic plan is an ongoing task of the CCEC Board of Directors. It was determined that an area needing to be addressed, especially in the aftermath of 9-11, was that of public safety. In response to this issue BM #23 Public Safety was drafted and adopted.

During the August CCEC Board of Directors meeting, Sylviron Cooperative shared its plan to secure funding to develop an incubator kitchen in Clare County. It was suggested that possibly a partnership between Sylviron and the Farmers' Market project (BM #12.2) might be possible. Future plans for the Farmers' Market project calls for an incubator/processing kitchen. Middle Michigan Development Corporation reported on the status of the business analysis they are completing for the 48625 zip code area (northern Clare County). All data has been collected and is in the process of being organized in a workable format. A committee has been appointed to review the data and prepare an economic plan for the area. A rural health care initiative is in the discussion stages. Talks are taking place with local health care providers. It has been suggested that the assisted living initiative (BM #18.10) be rolled into this new initiative.

September saw a five county Character Counts! Summit take place in conjunction with BM # 4.1. This was a great opportunity for each of the neighboring counties to share their successes and learn of the good things happening in other counties with regard to character education. It was reported that the parks and recreation commission (BM #5.1) has a survey ready for mailing to learn what citizens expect for the newly formed commission and what they are willing to pay for either through participation fees or taxes. The planning commission chair reported that the preparation of the county-wide land use plan (BM #1.1) is progressing well. Hard Times Café reported that their automotive repair training program (BM #13.2) is up and running. It was reported that the challenges of liability insurance have been overcome. Efforts of BM's #18.7 & #18.8 are taking place to assist with creating an accurate, up to date waiting list for Section 8 rental assistance. It was reported earlier in the year that Clare

County was in danger of losing a number of rental subsidy slots due to out-of-date waiting lists. The school districts of Clare County have expressed a desire to apply for a 21st Century Learning Grant. This will be the fourth time to apply, after several unsuccessful attempts. They are requesting both support and technical assistance from Clare County Enterprise Community. The CCEC Board adopted a resolution in support of their efforts.

Much of October's activity was centered on BM # 4.1 with the celebration of National Character Counts! Week. Clare County 4-H youth agent and benchmark leader gave the CCEC Board of Directors a report entitled "Year in Review" outlining the activities of the Clare County Character Counts! Coalition. The most notable fact was that 14 people have been trained as trainers. The most significant activity was a successful 1st annual Character Counts! Breakfast. Middle Michigan Development Corporation (BM #11.5) presented its report of the 48625 zip code business analysis to a joint session of the Harrison City Council and the Harrison Area Economic Development Corporation. USDA-RD Single Family Housing personnel reported on the success of the partnership between USDA-RD and CCEC. It was noted that pre-qualifications were completed at a rate of 3 to 1 compared to the other twelve counties in the region.

In November, the CCEC Board was introduced to a national initiative entitled Group WorkCamps. It appeared that participating with other partners to support a Group WorkCamp would align well with BM #18.4 (clean up/paint up program). It was learned that to host a Group WorkCamp during the summer of 04, contracts would need to be signed and in place by March 03. Meetings with potential partners will be scheduled ASAP. The Farmers' Market Committee, BM #12.2, reported that a potential site for the market had been identified. The market would open in the spring of 03 at a temporary site in a local city park. Future plans call for moving to a permanent site located on excess property bordering the city airport. At first glance, this appeared to be an excellent site as it is in the heart of the agriculture community, easily accessible by the Amish farmers.

December brought continued discussions of sponsoring a Group WorkCamp` during the summer of 04. Since the previous month's presentation, several agencies expressed a desire to partner with CCEC on this project. A local non-profit organization has offered to be the benchmark leader pending approval by their board of directors. It appears that BM #18.4 will become a major thrust to the CCEC housing initiative. LinkMichigan (BM #22) has become a reality. The Heart of Michigan Planning Group, a 13 county consortium, assembled earlier this year was awarded a \$326,000 grant to complete a study and develop a plan for bringing wide band-high speed Internet access to rural Michigan. A consulting firm has been hired and the study is under way. For a progress report on the project please visit <http://www.heartofmi.org>. The nominating committee reported that they have assembled a fine slate of nominees for the annual election to be held next month.