

2000 Annual Report Executive Summary

The Town of Austin Enterprise Community

The Austin Rural Enterprise Community (AREC) was an organization in transition during the year 2000. Volunteers provided all administrative and community participation support until an Executive Director, Ms. Charlotte Mathis, formerly CEO of the Bowling Green Enterprise Community, was hired in August. Ms. Mathis began her duties for AREC on August 28 but she continued to serve Bowling Green until October 31st. The first AREC office opened in December to provide the much needed community presence to reassure Austin residents of the long-term commitment by AREC to improve overall quality of life and promote financial sustainability throughout the community.

Partnerships have been many as projects and programs such as the Scott County Clearinghouse became a reality. Recognized by HUD-Indiana as a Best Practice Project in the year 2000, the Clearinghouse provides much more than mere physical items to families. The Clearinghouse provides food, emergency shelter, rent and utility assistance, clothing, and medical assistance in the form of prescription drugs. But more importantly, the Clearinghouse "restores" families to sustainability – perhaps not always full sustainability, but through this assistance a family begins to grow away from the subsidized way of life. In December, the Clearinghouse provided services to 757 individuals representing 239 households with the "normal" program assistance activities. In addition, 40 families received \$1,200.00 worth of food and toys during Christmas.

Another major partnership has been the Lifelong Learning Center. This project truly encompasses individuals from birth to death. Learning is an "ageless" reality, and through this facility, services from basic reading provided by the Scott County Literacy Council through job placement by the Indiana Work One Center and industrial training programs assist our residents through the transition of unemployment to skilled employee.

The AREC purchased eight lots in 2000 for the construction of single-family affordable housing. Another partnership project is leading the way to success. This one encompasses the Indiana Department of Commerce, Indiana Housing Finance Authority, Federal Home Loan Bank, USDA-RD, two local Community Housing Development Organizations, four local banks and the AREC to promote homeownership opportunities for Austin residents.

The AREC is proud of its educational facilities. Thanks to the foresight of our School Board and Superintendent, we have a Middle and High School complex second to none. Over \$15.5 million has been leveraged into our community which provides our children with the latest in technological opportunities, state-of-the art classrooms, recreational facilities and a full-scale auditorium. Our motto, "Where Eagles Soar", is truly reflective of our educational program.

AREC has grown during the year 2000, but all would be amiss if the contributions of the people truly responsible were not acknowledged. First of all, the visionary force by which our Strategic Plan was written and all of the volunteers who participated in that process. Next the Austin Town Board for the courage to seek designation on behalf of Austin's residents, the City of Scottsburg for their willingness to partner with Austin, and the AREC Board of Directors for stepping up to the plate to do what is right for the Community. Last, but certainly never least, the residents of Austin, for whom this entire program was designed, and without whom, this program will certainly fail.