



Here is your copy of

# Report to the Community

Read how local residents are  
answering the question,

*“What’s in your future?”*

make it happen !  
**Community**  
**Progress**  
**INITIATIVE**

June 2005

# make it happen ! Community Progress INITIATIVE



**April 22, 2004...** A standing room only crowd attended the Community Progress Initiative's kick-off event at Centralia Center in Wisconsin Rapids.

Among other speakers, members of the audience heard Bill Wheeler, WI Dept. of Commerce, when he announced a \$45,000 grant to the Initiative. "We're really lucky to have leaders to take the initiative. We can't just sit back and let opportunity pass us by," he said.

*"Change forces us out of our comfort zone."*

– Thomas "Gus" Mancuso, Wis. Rapids Daily Tribune, 4/24/04



**The Community Progress Initiative is about making our local community stronger and better for the future by addressing what's needed today.**

## *How?*

**The Initiative is using proven tools for community development such as:**

- It's inclusive, inviting all residents of any age, income, and affiliation.
- It's collaborative, inviting all businesses into industry cluster groups, and all residents into visioning sessions.
- It's supportive, providing leadership training, entrepreneur training, and financial resources.
- It's innovative, garnering national attention for its broad-based approach to solve the problems that face many rural areas.

**On the cover:** left to right, Lara Craft and Natalie Rotar, participants in the first Youth Rally (page 13).

***"What would you like to see happening in your community? What is your vision for the future and for future generations in our area?"***

**T**hese are the questions that were posed one year ago to residents and business owners within and around Nekoosa, Port Edwards, Pittsville, Rome, Rudolph, Vesper, and the Wisconsin Rapids/Biron/Grand Rapids areas. From there, the Community Progress Initiative became a community-wide project – seeking to define visions and create industry collaborations. The goal is to strengthen our community by building upon the resources we have right now and addressing the changes needed to make visions a reality.

The Initiative's slogan is "Make It Happen," and thousands of people throughout southern Wood County and the Town of Rome have embraced the idea that NOW is the time to do something. In this Report, you will see how people have taken direct ownership of planning for the future, and in one year have come together to chart a course of action.

During year two, we are working to broaden the base of individual involvement and ownership of community-wide goals. By year three, community participants will have identified what is needed to carry Progress Initiative concepts well into the future. Our shared efforts to build the local economy will not end with year three; instead, we must continue to support each other and focus on making a stronger future happen for ourselves, our children and grandchildren.

If you're involved in the Initiative, thank you! Progress couldn't be made without you. If you'd like to get involved, please jump in with your neighbors, friends, and colleagues. The pages of this Report are filled with opportunities for YOU, and we encourage you to work with the group that interests you most, and bring new ideas to the table.

*Connie Loden*

Heart of Wisconsin  
Business & Economic Alliance

*Kelly Lucas*

Community Foundation  
of South Wood County

# What is the Community Progress Initiative?

Outcomes that residents and business people are seeking:

Programs to help residents and business people reach their objectives:

Business Culture that creates a  
**Prosperous and Diverse Local Economy**

## Creating a Business-Friendly Culture

■ **Seven Industry Cluster networks:**

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Downtown Revitalization .....	page 5
New e-conomies .....	page 6
Paper and Forestry Products .....	page 6
Small Business Development .....	page 6
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■ **Entrepreneur Assistance programs:**

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Ideas Incubator .....	page 9
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Business Innovation Series .....	page 10
Small Business School .....	page 10
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Community Leadership that creates a  
**Strong and Positive Local Community**

## Building a Strong and Postitive Community

■ **Community Visioning and Progress Teams:**

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■ <b>Celebrating Success .....</b>	<b>page 18</b>

Capital and Funding that creates an  
**Innovative, Entrepreneurial and Self-reliant Culture**

## Increasing Capital and Funding

■ <b>Central Wisconsin Business Angels .....</b>	<b>page 8</b>
■ <b>Entrepreneurial Equity Loan Fund .....</b>	<b>page 9</b>
■ <b>Grants and Partnerships .....</b>	<b>pages 19 and 20</b>
■ <b>Keeping financial assets in our area and building endowment funds for local community improvements; see list of funds at right.</b>	

■ <b>Seven Community Endowment Funds:</b>	<b>page 16</b>
Nekoosa Area Community Fund	
Pittsville Area Community Fund	
Port Edwards Community Fund	
Rome Community Fund	
Rudolph Community Fund	
Vesper Area Community Fund	
Wisconsin Rapids Area Community Fund	

# The Community Progress Initiative is...

a bold three-year program in South Wood County and the Town of Rome to create vibrant communities with prosperous local economies.

This publication will show you what began in 2004, the first year of the Community Progress Initiative, and give you insight into what activities are continuing or developing. It's organized to help you easily learn about each program and activity, and know who to contact for more information. There is so much going on that it's impossible to include every detail in these pages, so you will find links to learn more at [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com).

This is an Initiative that welcomes you. Many people are already involved, and they're ready to help you get involved, too.

## Creating a Business-Friendly Culture

In this increasingly competitive and mobile world, communities with a business-friendly culture attract successful businesses. The innovative programs (that follow) encourage the expansion of existing businesses, provide technical assistance to start-up businesses, link owners to investment capital, and help build a diverse and dynamic business base for our region.

*First, here are some of the business development successes that have resulted since the start of the Community Progress Initiative:*

### Business Technical Support

■ Before the Community Progress Initiative	Avg. 19 contacts per month
■ May 2004 through April 2005	Avg. 35 contacts per month (84% increase)
■ Entrepreneurial Boot Camp	47 graduates to date

### Job Creation

	Number of jobs created:
■ 59 New business start-ups 2004	328
■ 19 New business start-ups Jan-Apr 2005	137

### Number of jobs added or retained:

■ 45 Expansion/Relocation/Ownership changes 2004	765
■ 5 Expansion/Relocation/Ownership changes Jan-Apr 2005	21

### Central Wisconsin Business Angels Investment

■ 2 Start-up projects reviewed in 2005, and funding assistance pledged: over \$150,000
--

### Recruited First Tenant for Rapids East Commerce Center

■ Brokaw Corn purchased property Dec 2004; construction to begin Spring 2005
--

### The project aims to:

- Create a business-friendly environment and empower entrepreneurs.
- Shape a shared vision for people throughout the region.
- Stimulate new enterprises, resulting in additional job opportunities.
- Build the area's endowed charitable assets to support sustainable community development.
- Motivate emerging leaders of all ages to drive positive change.
- Inspire community spirit and pride.



**Community Progress Initiative and this "Report to the Community"** made possible with partial funding from: Barker Mead Fund of Community Foundation of South Wood County; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture-Rural Development; WI Dept. of Commerce; Community Development Block Grant funds; and Stora Enso North America.



# Creating a Business-Friendly Culture

## Industry Cluster Networks



### INDUSTRY CLUSTER NETWORKS

**As competition expands, demand changes, and technology eliminates borders, how do business people find ways to identify new markets and satisfy customers?**

Thanks to the Progress Initiative, many business owners, managers, and employees came together last year and are now using an effective model for networking and finding solutions. As a result, seven Industry Clusters have emerged, and each seeks to identify opportunities for its industry, find ways to remove impediments to growth, and work together to help strengthen its industry. If local firms can find new ways to keep and grow business in our region, everyone will reap the benefits – businesses, employees, residents, and local nonprofit organizations, to name just a few.

These three pages will give you a brief overview of each Cluster, its activities, and whom you may contact to get involved. You are invited to attend any Cluster meetings; simply visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com) for dates and times, or contact a Co-Chair.

***"We believe the Initiative has the community's best interests at heart, and that it will work if it's driven by the community itself. Can the Progress Initiative succeed? With its track record so far, we think the smart answer is 'absolutely.'"***

*– Editorial, "Our View," Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, 1/14/05*

### CRANBERRY-AGRICULTURE CLUSTER

**"**If more people were made aware that Wood County is one of the largest producers of cranberries in the world, we could market it better in our local businesses. Tourism promotes cranberries, restaurants create great cranberry dishes, and some convenience stores/community events sell cranberry trail mixes and cranberry juice products. Just think of the opportunities – Wood County could become known as the 'Cranberry County.'"

*–Tamara Jepsen, Paper City Savings*



#### Objectives

- Integrate cranberry products into other industries such as tourism and restaurant/hospitality.
- Display cranberry products prominently throughout the state for different Wisconsin events and prominently on the internet.
- Support the Tourism Cluster in its efforts to expand harvest tours and other cranberry related events.
- Create a commercial incubator kitchen.
- Attract processors to relocate in central Wisconsin by creating a roundtable of processors, and organizing R & D efforts.

#### Actions

Cluster members are busy increasing their knowledge base of local growers' operations

and industry opportunities by hosting meetings at different grower locations, and bringing in outside speakers related to the industry. Members are also researching study tours related to the agricultural industry.

#### Contact:

Heather Wessling, [hjwessling@heartofwi.com](mailto:hjwessling@heartofwi.com), 715/423-1830

### DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION CLUSTER

**"**Downtowns represent the heart of an area and often reflect the history of a community. Ours is no different, yet it's been neglected somewhat. We invite anyone wishing to help shape Downtown's future to be involved in this Cluster."

*–Jackie Bredl-Dietrich, Whole Life Visions*

**"**What's most important to achieving our vision is to remember that we need leaders and the backing of our community and region. In order to keep focused on our vision of a vibrant, viable area, we need everyone working together."

*– Marion Ruelle, Community Volunteer*

#### Objectives

- Define the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown area.
- Promote Downtown as a diverse business and residential base.
- Inspire new entrepreneurs and existing businesses.
- Obtain grants and loans for historic preservation and renovation.
- Display art – building off of existing events.
- Promote Downtown as a destination.

#### Actions

Six committees are established to address: branding/marketing; events/entertainment; fundraising; a micro-enterprise zone; public artworks; and public works/planning/zoning. >>

# Industry Cluster Networks

## Continued from page 5...

A Downtown Revitalization Fund is established for donations to support downtown projects. To gain knowledge from visitors' impressions of Wisconsin Rapids, a group from Baraboo conducted a *First Impressions* visit and survey of the downtown area, and provided feedback to our Cluster.

**Contact:** Jackie Bredl-Dietrich,  
Jackie@wholelifevisions.com  
Larrie Hayes, larrie.hayes@wcnbank.com

***“Networks are the natural means of organization in today’s knowledge economy, and networks are fundamentally different than the hierarchies and silos that organized the Industrial Age. They behave differently and must be measured and managed differently. I commend the collaborators for acknowledging this difference and developing a forward-thinking program of communication and accountability in the Industry Clusters.”***

— Jan Twombly, CPA, President, *The Rhythm of Business, Inc.*, and co-author, *Collaborative Communities: Partnering for Profit in the Networked Economy*

## NEW e-CONOMIES CLUSTER

**“O**ur infrastructure for high-tech companies is very marketable; we have access to rail and interstate; and we offer excellent educational offerings. The website now under development will offer a powerful showcase of our community to people outside our area.

I’ve learned a great deal since joining the cluster; in particular, I’ve seen the degree to which a positive attitude exists and reaches others in our community. That wasn’t evident to me until I became involved with the Community Progress Initiative. I encourage others to do the same and they will see what I mean. When you surround yourself with people who are driven for positive change, it’s easy to perpetuate hope.” — John Wellens, *Renaissance Learning, Inc.*  
For full interview, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

### Objectives

- Address the technological concerns of the

community, and develop an excellent technology structure.

- Ideas Incubator: matching ideas to resources in the community to create a system for the growth of new ventures.
- Portal Website: collaborative effort to bring together community resources, link them to one site that brands the Central Wisconsin area, and makes our area’s assets visible to a wide audience.

### Actions

New e-conomies Cluster members have two committees: Ideas Incubator and Portal Website. They’ve received a grant for the development of the Ideas Incubator described on page 9. They also have mapped out the phases, timeline, and objectives of the portal website, and they investigated and discovered the “micropolitan” status for Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield.

### Contact:

Chad Bormann, [chadbormann@charter.net](mailto:chadbormann@charter.net)  
JR Siewert, [jrsiewert@coldwellbanker.com](mailto:jrsiewert@coldwellbanker.com)  
Dr. John Dietrich, [drjohndc@wctc.net](mailto:drjohndc@wctc.net)

## PAPER AND FORESTRY PRODUCT CLUSTER

**“W**e’ve come to realize that we indeed have the capability to create some new opportunities here that will take advantage of our strengths in the paper and forest products arena. If businesses have done it in the Fox River Valley, we can do it here. Joining a Cluster is one of the most viable ways to build our community.” — Dale Arendt, *The Arendt Group*

For full interview, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

### Objectives

- Continue to develop an enhanced spirit of local business collaboration as it relates to paper and forestry products.
- Create awareness in the community and beyond about the value and importance of paper.
- Establish two new small business ventures that provide services connected to paper and forestry products that currently don’t exist or are being outsourced to other communities.

### Actions

Cluster members organized a Study Tour to the Fox Valley in February 2005 (page 17). They are researching ways to bring together business partners in order to create new opportunities, and ways to enhance community events with paper themes.

**Contact:** Dale Arendt, [dsarendt@wctc.net](mailto:dsarendt@wctc.net)



**It’s a family affair** at the UPS Store for the Raulins — creating a new business and supporting the Community Progress Initiative.

## SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER

**“A**s we move forward with the entrepreneurial club, we hope to bring as many new ideas and businesses as possible to the table. There’s no limit. No matter what people do in their professional or personal lives, they have something to offer. We’re committed, and we’re succeeding in our work on the Boot Camps, the entrepreneurial club, and other activities that are growing new businesses and adding vitality and value to the community.”

— Alan Panek, *Panek Schill and Gebert*, and Steve Lewallen, *Steve’s Plumbing*

For full interview, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

### Objectives

- Survey and assess needs of the small business community.
- Assess the quality of technical advice given to



- small businesses at the present time.
- Support and present at the Entrepreneurial Boot Camp held at Mid-State Technical College.
  - Form and foster an ongoing entrepreneurial business-to-business club that brings in speakers representing all areas of business.

#### Actions

Cluster members have formed four committees and each is very active in creating specific outcomes to benefit the small business industry.

- **Boot Camp** Entrepreneurs conceptualize, write and articulate segments of their business plan to a panel of experts as the finale of this four-day program which provides in-depth business plan instruction to participants.

#### ■ Entrepreneurial Business-to-Business Club

The club emerged out of the need to provide an ongoing safe environment in which entrepreneurs can test their ideas for business in an environment of mentors and successful business people. The club is designed to connect with the emerging Ideas Incubator to stimulate business idea development which will also work to create employment opportunities.

- **Improving Delivery of Technical Assistance** This team tracks development of the Wisconsin Entrepreneurial Network (WEN) that is a state-wide effort to provide entrepreneurs with web-based tools and assistance in starting and maintaining their businesses. The Cluster builds relationships with technical providers and is initiating meetings with organizers of the WEN.

- **Survey Results** A survey was done last year and will be assessed quantitatively by a team of students from Mid-State Technical College so the needs of small businesses are addressed in an objective manner. An expanded study is being considered to assess business needs on an *ongoing* basis.

#### Contact:

Alan Panek, a.panek@panekschillandgebert.com  
Steve Lewallen, stevespl@wctc.net

## TOURISM CLUSTER

“I feel that any involvement in the Progress Initiative makes a positive difference in our community. Everyone involved can gain greater appreciation for the multi-faceted area we live in.” – Mary Brazeau Brown, Glacial Lake Cranberries, Inc.

“Collaboration between partners only strengthens our ability to promote the area. The Progress Initiative has allowed us to grow beyond our walls and out into the community for new ideas, startling discoveries,

and additional partnerships that serve to make our organization stronger.” – Karin Mast, Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

#### Objectives

- Cooperative marketing
- Visitor's Guide
- Portal website
- Increase the image of the Heart of Wisconsin area as a destination

#### Actions

Cluster members are serving as a support mechanism for events organized by other Clusters, and they're evaluating and contributing to the 2006 Visitor's Guide. Members are also contributing to a portal website that will offer links to many diverse resources of the Central Wisconsin area.

#### Contact:

Mary Brazeau Brown, mary@cranberrylink.com  
Karin Mast, mast@visitwisrapids.com

*“I am impressed with the enthusiasm, energy, and willingness on behalf of the Cluster participants to take responsibility for their activities. Taking responsibility is a major element required to influence positive change in South Wood County. At every cluster meeting, tasks are identified and a request made to members, with someone stepping up to meet the challenge. Congratulations!”*

– Jim Haguewood, Clallam County Washington  
Economic Development Corp. and Clallam netWorks,  
www.clallam.org



#### Keeping dollars local.

The Workforce Training & Education Cluster members meet often to work on their new website and other objectives to make our area an educational hub.

## WORKFORCE TRAINING & EDUCATION CLUSTER

“One of the primary objectives of the Workforce Training & Education Cluster is to help employers and workers sort through all the training offerings that are available in our community and beyond. For example, if an employer is looking for customer-service-skills training, where can the employer turn? We're working on a portal website to help people find the training locally and for others to come here for their training. Our goal is to keep dollars local. We have excellent resources, and we can make this an educational hub for many!”

– Doris McAllister, Mid-State Technical College

For full interview, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

#### Objectives

- Increase the awareness of current training opportunities to meet the needs of current and prospective employers.
- Increase local opportunities for employee development instruction.
- Create a regionally-based website that shows all education and training resources available for different niches.
- Track success.

#### Actions

Cluster members have been busy this year identifying needs and resources. They are developing a comprehensive plan to market and communicate available resources in order to make Central Wisconsin a technical training and education center. In addition, they are developing indicators and documenting outcomes to track their progress.

#### Contact:

Deanna MacMillan, dmacmill@ncwwdb.org  
Doris McAllister, dorismcallister@mstc.edu  
Dean Ryerson, dean.ryerson@wrps.org

# Entrepreneur Assistance Programs



## ENTREPRENEUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

**A primary goal of the Progress Initiative is to empower entrepreneurs to be successful. Here are nine programs and resources to help make it happen:**

### ENTREPRENEURIAL BOOT CAMP

You have an idea for a new service, but you're not really sure if it will make a good business or not. What should you do?

Go to camp! More specifically, sign up for the Entrepreneurial Boot Camp held at Mid-State Technical College throughout the year. Boot Camp is the perfect environment to test new ideas with others, receive practical training from business owners and instructors, and begin writing a plan before the program ends. At the final session, participants present their business plan to a panel of experts in business, banking, and commerce. The panel evaluates the merits of the idea as a whole and offers advice to improve components that still need work. Feedback allows each participant a chance to test his/her ideas before turning a plan into reality.

To date, there have been 47 graduates of four Boot Camps. Graduates have started four new businesses, five businesses have expanded, and two are now searching for a permanent location in our local area. Upcoming four-day Boot Camps will be held June 16, 17, 18, and 20, and September 29, 30, October 1 and 3, 2005.

*To learn more about Entrepreneurial Boot Camps, contact Heather Wessling, 715/423-1830, [hjwessling@heartofwi.com](mailto:hjwessling@heartofwi.com).*

### *Here are just a few Boot Camp success stories and testimonials:*

#### ■ Synergetic Marketing and Distribution, LLC and FruitEssentials™ Nutritional Products Allen Luke, Principal

"The Boot Camp gave me the necessary push to complete the business plan we never had from the beginning. While we're successful in our ventures, the importance of having a good and comprehensive plan should never go underestimated. I was absolutely amazed at the overabundance of resources and services available to help those who want to succeed. I strongly recommend this Camp to any individual considering a new venture."

#### ■ Rudolph's Little Dears Child Care Center Rich and Caroline Casper

"The most important thing that we gained from the Boot Camp was how to write a successful business plan. We learned how important a complete business plan is, and our bank accepted it. The business people who talked at the Camp gave us great insight.

"How did we learn of it? Our first call was to Mary Wirtz at the Community Foundation to learn if they knew of any funding available to open a new child care center. The first thing Mary suggested was that we attend the Entrepreneurial Boot Camp the following week. Talk about timing!"



**Caroline Casper**, Rudolph's Little Dears Child Care Center.

#### ■ LaBoutique des Maries' Rita Villeneuve

"Boot Camp provided me with a wealth of information from many speakers who shared their expertise and success stories. This forum helped me realize that there are specific markets for my product that I hadn't even considered, and it allowed me to think about an approach to maximize my talent. Our teams and speakers had great suggestions to find a better way to reach potential customers."



**Wendy Klotz**, owner of Party Time Cakes & More, is a recent Boot Camp grad who learned about the many important ingredients for success.

### CENTRAL WISCONSIN BUSINESS ANGELS NETWORK

Want to give a potential entrepreneur wings to fly? The Business Angel Network connects new entrepreneurs with successful entrepreneurs who serve as mentors to help with business decisions. The network is a collaborative effort of Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance and Portage County Business Council. It assists with equity financing of business start-ups and expansions that produce a product or service exported beyond Central Wisconsin.

Business Angels have already assisted a forest products firm with \$1 million in financing that helped save more than 70 jobs in Portage and Wood counties, and helped an agricultural equipment manufacturer polish its presentation to secure outside venture capital for its share of a \$35 million processing plant.



# Entrepreneur Assistance Programs

## **Two more businesses with complete business plans are under consideration:**

- Financing assistance to begin manufacturing, assembling, and supplying a patented product to the medical community.
- Cash investment to expand inventory and distribute a patented garden tool into large national retail chains.

To learn more about the Business Angel Network, contact Connie Loden, 715/423-1830, cloden@heartofwi.com.

*"I want to give back to the community by assisting others in business start-up or expansion, have fun in making investments that facilitate entrepreneurs to be successful and grow the local economy, while receiving an appropriate return for all the investors."*

*— Richard Kenney, an Angel Investor and steering committee member*

## **ENTREPRENEUR EQUITY LOAN FUND**

You have a good idea, and a great plan. What next? What options do entrepreneurs have when it's time to finance a business that has been thoroughly researched and planned? Thanks to a grant requested by members of the Community Progress Initiative in 2004, there will be a new avenue of affordable financing available. A \$248,000 federal appropriation has been received through Representative Dave Obey's office to establish the new Entrepreneur Equity Loan Fund in the fall of 2005. Funding will be available for entrepreneurs with successful business plans to implement local start-ups. As each business repays its loan, the funding can be loaned to help others. This will be a great boost to business development as one more tool to use in conjunction with the traditional sources of financing available. More information will be forthcoming from Rep. Obey's office in fall 2005.



**Entrepreneurial Business-to-Business Club** Alan Panek and Lonnie Reetz, members of the Small Business Cluster, help organize monthly meetings for networking and sharing ideas. Meetings are free, but pre-registration is requested; call 423-1830. For information about future meetings and presenters, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

## **ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS CLUB**

**The Entrepreneurial Business-to-Business Club is an innovation of the Small Business Development Cluster and the Community Progress Initiative. It's dedicated to:**

- Act as a catalyst for entrepreneurial activity in the Heart of Wisconsin.
- Provide a network for members to exchange ideas and build contacts in a confidential setting.
- Offer entrepreneurs the opportunity for mock presentations of their plans to panels of bankers, investors, and peers.
- Host panel speakers for businesses to learn from other businesses, concentrating in the areas of taxation, leadership, budget forecasting, technology, and business plan development.
- Connect with the Ideas Incubator of the New e-conomies Cluster to stimulate development of business ideas which will create employment opportunities and revitalize the local economy.
- Spread contagious enthusiasm for business success and entrepreneurship.

The Club meets at noon on the first Wednesday of each month at the Wood County Courthouse auditorium. Michael Jones, an independent marketing consultant from Madison, kicked off the first meeting on June 1 with his presentation about creative marketing.

**IDEAS INCUBATOR** – an environment dedicated to collecting and hatching good ideas!

A \$20,000 grant was received from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce's Community-Based Economic Development Program to help develop the Ideas Incubator. The design of the system is being developed by the New e-conomies Cluster.

### **The Ideas Incubator is a collection point for:**

- Ideas to be nurtured and developed into businesses.
- Posting different companies' needs for services and supplies.
- Matching entrepreneurs with business opportunities.
- Survey tools for determining market feasibility.

**The Ideas Incubator will consist of a web-driven database for the collection, sorting, growing and matching of ideas. The system is designed to flow in both directions:**

- Ideas seeking entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs seeking ideas.
- Businesses seeking sources of services and suppliers, and agencies and suppliers seeking ways to expand their offerings and gain new customers.
- Identifying target industries to recruit, and industries looking for growth opportunities.



***"...If you are not involved, get involved;  
if you are somewhat involved, get more involved;  
if you are very involved, get others involved!"***

*— Mark Swanson, Renaissance Learning, Inc.  
and a member of the New e-conomies Cluster.  
Remarks from the Community Progress Celebration,  
January 11, 2005*

# Entrepreneur Assistance Programs

*Continued from page 9...*

## ENTREPRENEURIAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT

As part of the Progress Initiative's efforts to create a business-friendly community, Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance added a small business specialist staff member to provide one-on-one advice and support programming for business development. Potential entrepreneurs are provided with a "tool kit" of resources to help them develop their business from initial concept to opening day.

Resources are available for existing businesses – to give advice on day-to-day operational questions or business expansion. Specialists will help determine which additional agencies such as the Wisconsin Learning Center, Small Business Development Center, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), or Mid-State Technical College can provide technical support or programming on an individual basis.

This nurturing network of resources is instrumental for emerging entrepreneurs and experienced business owners alike. Since the kick-off of the Community Progress Initiative, 426 potential entrepreneurs have received technical assistance.

## SMALL BUSINESS SCHOOL

As part of the Progress Initiative, Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance is sponsoring a new television series on River Cities Community Access television. The series, *Small Business School*, is produced and narrated by Hattie Bryant of PBS. She examines a business inside-out to give viewers a new perspective on how to run a successful enterprise or to take a company to the next level. Hattie's mantra, "Learn today, earn tomorrow, and return forever," permeates her stories. She calls small business owners our "new American heroes," regarded for their self-sufficient and independent qualities. Don't miss her series airing on River Cities Community Access television on Monday mornings at 9:30; each half-hour program repeats at 7:00 p.m. on Mondays. Tapes are available for check-out at Heart of Wisconsin Alliance, 715/423-1830.

***"The world we have created is a product of our thinking;  
it cannot be changed without changing our thinking."***

ALBERT EINSTEIN



The highly-acclaimed PBS series, *Small Business School*, hosted by Hattie Bryant, can be seen each Monday on River Cities Community Access. Tune in for interviews with small business owners and their stories about how business problems are solved in order to grow.

## BUSINESS INNOVATION SERIES

In a world that's constantly changing, business people must keep abreast of new ideas and methods, and the Business Innovation Series is designed to help them do just that. Workshops offer timely information in a half-day session, and over 50 participants took advantage of these free seminars in the Progress Initiative's first year.

Jim Berry, of Associated Financial Group, led an informative discussion of the advantages and potential savings of Health Savings Accounts. Leon Ostrowski, retired professional from a Fortune 200 company and a professional business consultant, gave a valuable workshop on methodology for measuring your business' potential.

***Based on requests from local business people, future topics will include:***

- Creative marketing for small business
- Cash flow management
- Taxation issues
- Technology issues

Visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com) > Program Dates.

***"My Grow Wisconsin Initiative calls for investing in our communities to improve prospects for future economic growth. The city [Wisconsin Rapids] and its partners, Heart of Wisconsin Alliance and Community Foundation of South Wood County, have developed a comprehensive plan for entrepreneurial development that can serve as a model for other communities."***

— Gov. James Doyle  
As an indicator of strong governmental support for the Progress Initiative, Wisconsin State Governor Doyle announced that the Initiative had been awarded a \$45,000 planning grant from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.

## BUSINESS INCUBATOR

At the strategic planning session for Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance in August 2003, a business incubator was discussed as a possible strategy for nurturing start-up businesses and growing successful new enterprises. The business incubator concept entails providing below-market rates for rental space and a wide variety of shared services and support assistance for its tenants to help the tenant businesses get off the ground. Wisconsin Rapids had a business incubator offering these services at one time; however, it no longer operates in the same capacity.

It was determined that a feasibility study be conducted to determine the need and criteria for financial success of reinstating or building a new incubator, and for identifying the services it should offer. This feasibility study was commissioned in October 2004 to evaluate all issues, and it's near completion. It will be reviewed to determine what, if any, steps will be taken toward a business incubator development.

# Building a Strong and Positive Community

## Community Vision and Progress Teams



### BUILDING A STRONG AND POSITIVE COMMUNITY

People choose to live, work, play, and invest in vibrant communities where fresh ideas are appreciated, diversity is celebrated, and unique activities are abundant. This section of the report will describe many of the community-building programs offered through the Progress Initiative.

### PROGRESS TEAMS

How do you shape a shared vision for people throughout the region and inspire community pride and spirit?

It all began on April 22, 2004 at the kick-off of the Initiative; over 200 people attended. Since that time, guided by David Beurle of Innovative Leadership, over 1,000 residents have worked together to create a vision for each community, and they're taking steps to help make the visions a reality. The Progress Rallies and the Make It Happen Visioning Sessions have been important components in inspiring residents to identify and create the kind of communities they want to live in.

The primary role of Progress Team members is advancing community vision – to promote their community's vision by collaborating with key community groups, officials, and leaders, and to give all residents a chance to get involved in community improvement projects and issues.

Here is a summary of each Team's actions to date.

### NEKOOSA AREA

#### Vision:

The Nekoosa area is a positive, progressive community which celebrates its history and family values in a friendly small-town setting with big-town services. It is a business-friendly community that utilizes our unique natural resources to create a thriving economy built on manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, and outdoor recreation.

#### Activities:

- Develop a PowerPoint presentation to educate others about the benefits of the Initiative, the purpose of the Progress Team, and its objectives.
- Create greater community awareness and collaboration by meeting with community organizations and leaders, such as Nekoosa Area Business Association, cranberry growers, Historic Pointe Basse, school district, athletic association, Fire Department, conservation clubs, recreation clubs, local elected officials within and around Nekoosa.
- Contact local organizations and businesses to request information for an existing website, [www.nekoosa.org](http://www.nekoosa.org).

### PITTSVILLE AREA

#### Vision:

Pittsville is a safe, friendly, progressive community that supports families and active lifestyles. We offer unique events and enrichment opportunities for all to enjoy.

We offer enticing main street specialty businesses attracting recreational visitors and residents. Our thriving economy supports small and medium niche businesses which build upon our strong agricultural base.

#### Activities:

Residents of the area met on May 25, 2005 to create their Vision Statement. Action steps will be defined in the weeks ahead.



**"Arrows moving in the same direction."** One of the most powerful visuals of the Progress Rallies is the graphic developed by David Beurle of Innovative Leadership – to show communities how vision brings people together to focus, move forward in the same direction, and create their desired future.

### PORT EDWARDS

#### Vision:

Port Edwards is a safe, residential, riverfront village of choice that embodies a strong sense of connectedness among all its residents, supports family values and active lifestyles, and celebrates an abundance of community pride and involvement.

Our economic vision supports residential development with an array of thriving neighborhood businesses and services.

>>



## Progress Teams

*Continued from page 11...*



**Port Progress!** Marshall Buehler and Leslie Arendt unveil one of the new banners developed by the Port Progress Team.

### Activities:

Raising the level of community awareness about the Initiative through:

- The sale of wristbands which read, "Port Pride - Port Progress."
- Three large banners that read, "Welcome to Port Edwards" and "Make it Happen."
- A brochure to promote the beauty and benefits of Port Edwards will be mailed to residents, and available to others at Heart of Wisconsin Alliance, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and many realtor offices.

## ROME

### Vision:

Rome strives to be a diverse community, offering a variety of residential living, year-round recreation and business opportunities, with an emphasis on environmental preservation.

### Activities:

Through the community visioning process, Rome residents identified a key objective: promote a strong community with a positive and vibrant economy. The town's vision statement was developed in July 2004 and then adopted by the Town Board in January 2005. Community strengths and opportunities were also identified and stimulated the development of 14 groups that are working to address strategic community-building actions.

- The "Rome Is More" Team meets every two weeks.
- Recently completed a PowerPoint presentation to educate others about the benefits of the

Initiative, the purpose of the Progress Team, and its objectives.

- The Rome Connection Committee will coordinate a contest this summer to create a unique flag for Rome. The idea was unanimously approved by the Rome Town Board in February 2005.
- The Connection Committee is also developing a new event known as "Taste of Rome" which will take place on July 16, 2005, in Rome's new business center.
- With many communities nominated, Rome was one of six to receive an honorable mention for the 2005 Top Rural Development Initiative programs in the state of Wisconsin (page 18).

*"The Progress Initiative has been a very, very positive thing for Rome and brought the town together in a number of different ways ... Growing means that the community is going to change; it's good to plan ahead, set a course, and get a direction determined."*

— David Dahl, "Rome Honored for Community's Progress toward the Future," *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, 4/15/05



**"I grew up in Rudolph, and I want my grandkids to have a Rudolph to come home to."**

— Kathy Hartjes, member of the Rudolph Progress Team

## RUDOLPH

### Vision:

Rudolph has a welcoming small-town atmosphere that embraces a wide range of cultures and ideas, provides a nurturing environment for families,

and creates a sense of community for all of its residents.

It is a vibrant country community, worth seeking out, that builds on its agricultural heritage with unique experiences, specialty shops, attractions, and events which appeal to residents and visitors alike.

### Activities:

- Creating greater community awareness and collaboration by meeting with community leaders, such as the Fire Department, Rudolph Country Christmas organizers, veterans groups, and Town and Village boards.
- Becoming a community resource by providing informational materials and brochures.
- Exploring a local business council for Rudolph.

## VESPER AREA

### Vision:

The Vesper area is a safe, family-friendly community which celebrates its small-town characteristics and works together to create a positive environment and exciting community events.

It is a Heritage Village with thriving businesses that celebrates its agricultural background and offers unique outdoor recreation opportunities and successful community-based events.

### Activities:

- Vesper Improvement Committee is the Progress Team's name.
- Working to increase local awareness and participation in Vesper's Initiative by making presentations to the Village Board, Fire Department, businesses, and organizations.
- Spearheaded *Family Fun Day*, March 19, 2005, a day for the community to raise money for shelving at the new Vesper Library and have fun at the same time. Family Fun Day increased community leadership opportunities and brought many visitors into Vesper.
- Promoted *Community Celebration Day*, May 14, 2005, a day of events and community-wide garage sales. All area businesses, organizations, groups, and residents were invited to participate, and other events were designed to raise money for the Vesper

Community Fund and other local nonprofit programs.



**Vesper Recreation Area** is a great example of a collaborative community improvement project.

*"With what happened to the small village [of Vesper], people kind of get down and out because so much has happened to them. [The Initiative] was an opportunity ... We had some hard times, but we feel that with a lot of the community interest and business, we can decide to revitalize Vesper by doing something different."*

— Ruth Cline, "Vesper Group Rallies for Rebirth,"  
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, 3/18/05

## WISCONSIN RAPIDS AREA

### Vision:

The Wisconsin Rapids area is a close-knit inclusive community that celebrates diversity; supports and promotes the arts and special events; and offers a hip, cosmopolitan and bustling downtown.

The Wisconsin Rapids area supports a thriving, diversified economy in a healthy environment and through a strategy of regional branding supports the development of businesses and entrepreneurship. Unique recreation and tourism opportunities are abundant and anchored by a historic downtown, riverfront neighborhood.

### Activities:

- Developing a family event to celebrate the communities of Wisconsin Rapids, Biron, and Grand Rapids. The event will be held on July 1, 2005 at Grand Rapids Lions Club.

- Convened meetings of local organizations around the topic of collaboratively promoting visual and performing arts in our region.
- Convening discussions among civic leaders and elected officials in Wisconsin Rapids, Biron, and Grand Rapids around the topic of collaboration.

*"The Community Progress Initiative is at the very cutting edge of what rural communities around the world are doing to revitalize themselves. Local people have demonstrated a deep commitment and desire to be part of shaping their own future – they're 'making it happen!' This, to me, is the most inspiring part of the whole Initiative."*

— David Beurle, Innovative Leadership

## YOUTH TEAM

All young people are invited and many have been involved in a variety of Initiative programs. In addition, the Progress Initiative has a program designed specifically for younger residents, the Youth Team.

The Community Progress Youth Team became a reality in January 2005 at a rally for young people in southern Wood County and Rome, grades 5 through 12. Over 85 students attended, and since then, they have established active youth committees to research, plan, and organize projects that will build community pride and increase the ability of young people to have a positive impact on the future of their community.

### Activities:

- **Campus Clean-Up:** Campus Clean-Up Day was held on May 13, 2005 at 13 schools throughout South Wood County. Approximately 1,500 students participated, and they challenged businesses to clean up their "campuses" as well.
- **Representation on Common Council:** Young people want a voice in their community. They are the future of our area and would like to help shape it. Students have researched other communities that have student representation on local government and they're meeting with Wisconsin Rapids Common Council members to discuss options for representation.
- **Public Transportation:** Young people want the independence to travel throughout South Wood County on their own. Stops would include the YMCA, shopping areas, the movie theatre, and libraries, to name a few. A committee is researching this idea.

*"The Youth Rally really went well, because instead of complaining about what we don't have, we talked about what we could do to get what we need."*

— Jenna Kizewski, Assumption High School senior,  
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, 1/11/05



**Young people make it happen** – with great ideas to share and the enthusiasm to get it done! At the Progress Initiative Youth Rally in January, over 85 students attended and began brainstorming on how to make the area better for future generations.

*"The rally has given kids a united voice ... We are lucky to have a community that cares about our ideas and will help us make them a reality. There will be future meetings, and all kids, fifth grade and up, can come and make a huge difference."*

— Savannah Gachnang and Mallory Villeneuve  
(7th grade), and Ellery Orr (6th grade), Immanuel  
Lutheran School, "Youth Rally Lets Kids Have Voice,"  
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, 2/15/05



# Community Leadership Program



## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

A very important component of Community Progress Initiative programming is to *"Motivate emerging leaders to drive positive change."* One of the best way to motivate is to give people the skills they need to achieve success. Here in South Wood County and Rome, the Heart of Wisconsin Community Leadership Program provides an excellent curriculum to meet this objective. It attracts more participants every year and had 28 graduates in April 2005 – the largest class ever!

During an eight-month period, Leadership participants meet formally once a month to learn about: local and regional economic development; the basics of local, county, and state government; issues related to education, health and human services, and diversity; and skills needed for organizational and community leadership. They receive hands-on training in conflict resolution, influencing change, networking, and working with groups.

Leadership participants meet on their own to design and execute a community improvement project.

***Beginning in September 2004, and ending in April, the Class of 2005 has made the following six projects a reality:***

## MEDIA LITERACY

This group hosted a one-day media literacy session for 30 seventh graders from West and East Junior High Schools. The event was designed to promote positive youth development in our community by

challenging students to come up with a campaign to make a positive change within their school. Now, East Junior High students are working to promote healthy choices by campaigning to get a milk vending machine at their school.

## WISCONSIN RAPIDS SNOW SCULPTURE SPECTACULAR

With a focus on supporting downtown Wisconsin Rapids businesses, this group is organizing a snow sculpture contest in Veterans Park to be held on February 4, 2006. The event aims to attract individuals, families, and organizations for a day of outdoor winter fun and food with local "celebrities" to judge entries and award prizes. Another goal is to make this Spectacular an annual event - creating one more good reason to visit our area in the winter.



**Winters are spectacular in Central Wisconsin!** Mark your calendar for the Snow Sculpture Spectacular to be held on February 4, 2006. There will be fun for the entire family, food to enjoy, and creative snow sculptures to bring out the "kid" in everyone.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

This group is working to address the problem of how to increase awareness of community-wide events, and members are creating a single web page, listing all the various events in our community. They hope to have the website up and running before summer 2005. Visit [www.wisrapids.com](http://www.wisrapids.com) soon to see the group's results.

## VOLUNTEER WOOD COUNTY WEBSITE

This group is converting the South Wood County Volunteer Center's paper database into a dynamic web source. Volunteers will be able to review up-to-date opportunities online, search by their individual interests, and get contact information to connect directly with organizations seeking help. Visit [www.volunteerwoodcounty.org](http://www.volunteerwoodcounty.org) for details.



## 2005 HEART OF WISCONSIN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP CLASS

**Left to Right Front Row:** Deb Thomas/Community Foundation of SWC, Vicki Peshek/Riverview Hospital, Jennifer Swensen/Girl Scouts of Woodland Council, Lindsay Manternach/ODC, Susan Manock/Bull's Eye Credit Union **2nd Row:** Angie Paulsen/Wood County Natl Bank, Cheryl Posner/Community Foundation of SWC, Jill Degler/U.S. Bank, Denise Orr/community volunteer, Joanne Harmon/Town of Rome, Dan Cummins/Domtar Industries **3rd Row:** Terry Dolan/Stora Enso North America, Debbie Steltenpohl/River Cities Bank, Noreen Bartosh/Paper City Savings, LeeAnnette Schmidmayr/WRPS, Eric Norton/McMillan Memorial Library, Bill Jarvis/Port Credit Union **4th Row:** Jeff Coulthurst/Domtar Industries, Rich Heinz/City of Wis. Rapids, Rick Schmutzer/Wood County Telephone Co., Jason Grueneberg/Wood County Planning & Zoning, Phil Hartley/Stora Enso North America, DaNita Carlson/Wood County Health Dept., Terry Whitmore/WRPS, Mark Nordbeck/Lampert-Lee & Assoc. **Absent:** Dawn Desorcy/City of Wis. Rapids, Pam Ironside/community volunteer, Carol Olson/Wis. Rapids Area Catholic Schools

## BACKSTAGE.05 & KAYAK LAUNCHES

This group is working on two projects: The first is repeating an event started by the 2004 Leadership Class – coordinating a drug- and alcohol-free band concert for area youth on May 21, 2005 at Golden Sands Speedway. The second is a new project that has developed canoe and kayak launch sites to be installed in spring 2005. Both projects are excellent examples of ways to promote the Heart of Wisconsin area as a destination for recreation.

### ■ How to join the next Leadership Class:

Individuals, businesses, and organizations may nominate participants, and Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance will send forms directly to the nominated applicant. The next class begins in September; applications will be accepted until August 19, 2005 (or sooner if the class reaches maximum capacity.) For an application, call Jill Cavanaugh at 715/423-1830.



## New Ideas! Speaker Series



### NEW IDEAS! SPEAKER SERIES

Another way to motivate emerging leaders and people from all walks of life is to bring in nationally known speakers to share research, stories, and innovative plans that can be adapted for our area. Often these high-caliber presenters are available only in larger cities with an admission fee, but the Community Progress Initiative brings these New Ideas! Speakers to our area, for everyone – with no admission fee.

**C.Y. Allen** kicked off the series in June 2004 with “How to Drive Change in Your Community.” Over 200 people attended to hear this University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point professor of communications. C.Y. used his wit and wisdom to inspire the audience to play an active role in driving change in their community.

**Rebecca Ryan**, founder of Next Generation Consulting, shared her research and knowledge of Generation X in August 2004. Her presentation, “Show Up, Reach Out, Dig In,” attracted over 150 people who left with a greater understanding of how to communicate with young adults. Rebecca’s message is clear: we can’t assume that the next generation learns and thinks like we do. If we want the economy to grow locally, we must re-think what’s needed to attract the next generation. From an abundance of research and case studies, there are clearly-defined strategies for a community to consider. For details of Rebecca’s findings, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

**Tim Burns** presented his message of “Building Resiliency in Your Community” in January 2005. The audience of 30 educators and other interested residents learned that just one nurturing role model for a child can help that child overcome

hardships and disadvantages, and learn to excel. Tim Burns also made it apparent that fun and laughter is needed in everyone’s life, and that, too, leads to success!

**John Powers**, playwright and nationally-acclaimed speaker, brought down the house in March with his presentation of “Loving Where You Live and What You Do.” He used humor to carry his message that people have the power to make their community a place where they love to live and love to work. Over 210 participants left with wide grins and ideas to keep themselves inspired.

**Katherine Tyler Scott** brought her message, “The Transforming Power of Leadership – Values, Vision, and Community Vitality,” to an eager audience of 84 on April 15. She shared stories of other towns that had economic hardships – but started doing things differently – and how their actions led to economic prosperity.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR for “The Owner’s Guide to the Future” -

Don’t miss David Zach, professionally trained futurist, at the next New Ideas! Speaker event, Thursday, June 23, 7:00 pm at the Performing Arts Center. You might be amazed by the information, technology, and trends that will shape our world tomorrow and for generations to come. Visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com) for more information.

***“We’ve been trying to get strategies. Now the next step is to take these concepts and visions, and make them a reality. I think this is the difficult part. She [Katherine Tyler Scott] will be very good to give us the tools we need and give us the next step to get there.”***

*– Deborah Hickey, “Speaker to Address Managing Community Change,”  
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, 4/11/05*



**“John Powers is a phenomenal man ... Absolutely fabulous ... Very upbeat, practical advice ... Motivational.”** These are just a few of the survey comments made by people attending John Powers’ presentation in March. As part of the New Ideas! Speaker Series, nationally known playwright John Powers used personal examples of how to help yourself and others to “Love Where You Live and What You Do.”

### Senior Statesman Program

This workshop series for people age 50-plus, provides an excellent way to learn how government operates and how citizens can be active participants. The first leadership workshop for senior advocates was held April 18-19, 2005 at Centralia Center. The program featured meetings with representatives from their local, state, and federal governments, and the class attended a Wood County Board meeting. Participants gained a valuable perspective on government from the politicians’ point of view. A second workshop will take place in Marshfield in 2006.



Participants in the Senior Statesman series learned the ropes about government in April. Standing l to r: Bill Risinger, Barbara Berg, Jim Custer, Ray Kalpinski, Rosanne Kedrowski, Marion Hokamp. Seated l to r: Joe Hokamp, Teddie Archer, Bernice Weiland, Ruth Moody, Daila Goldamer.

# Community Endowment Funds and Grants



## COMMUNITY FUNDS AND GRANTS

To assist local residents in creating their own future, Community Foundation of South Wood County has created seven community endowment funds, one for each community below. Grants are also available from these funds.

- Nekoosa Area
- Pittsville Area
- Port Edwards
- Rome
- Rudolph
- Vesper Area
- Wisconsin Rapids Area

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY FUNDS?

The purpose of each fund is to support unique progress/community development opportunities as identified by residents. Each area has a volunteer Community Fund Committee, comprising of local citizens serving three-year terms. The committee members are responsible for fundraising, setting grant guidelines, accepting grant applications, and making grants to improve their own community. You may view a list of the committee members at [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com).

## WHAT IS AN ENDOWMENT FUND?

An endowment fund is one in which all donations are combined into a permanent account and serve as the principal balance. The principal is never spent; it's "endowed" and invested permanently so that it is available for growth forever. As the fund earns interest and dividends over time, a portion of the earnings is distributed annually in the form of grants.

## HOW DO I DONATE TO MY COMMUNITY'S FUND?

Thanks to the generosity of the Barker Mead Fund through Community Foundation of South Wood County, NOW is the perfect time to donate. The Barker Mead Fund has pledged a total of \$140,000 in matching gifts (\$20,000 each) to the seven Community Funds.

Your donation to the Fund of your choice will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Barker Mead Fund, up to a total of \$20,000 per Fund. For example, when you donate \$25 to a Community Fund, your gift will be matched with a \$25 donation; that's a total of \$50 toward the Fund. Your contribution will be doubled! The more the principal grows, the more it will earn for future grants to your community.

## IS THERE GRANT MONEY AVAILABLE NOW?

Yes. Each Community Fund has \$5,000 for grant-making. This money is available through the generosity of the Barker Mead Fund through Community Foundation of South Wood County. So, while Community Fund committees are raising money for their principal balances, they may also accept grant applications and make distributions.

## WHO MAY APPLY FOR A GRANT?

Grant proposals may be submitted by local community service groups, citizens organizing community improvement projects, and 501(c)(3) organizations. You can find a grant application form on [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com) > Community Funds, or contact a member of your local Community Fund committee.

## HOW ARE GRANT DISTRIBUTIONS DETERMINED?

Your local Community Fund Committee will review applications at regular intervals, and based upon grant guidelines, will determine which grant requests to fund.

## HOW CAN I HELP?

Each fund needs your support today to ensure that grants can be made in the future – for generations



**Taking care of HOME.** "We hope you will take advantage of this offer. We do this with love. This is where Gilbert, Hart, and I grew up. It is a natural for us with our interests in South Wood County to want to provide opportunities that support its future. I have lived in Appleton for 19 years and Arizona for over 30 years – but this is my 'Heart Home,'" said Ruth Barker when she announced matching gifts from the Barker Mead Fund through Community Foundation of South Wood County. Pictured left to right: Hartley and Ruth Barker, and Jaylee and Gilbert Mead.

to come. Please make a donation. Donations of any size will be matched by the Barker Mead Fund, up to \$20,000 per fund, now through 12/31/05.

Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law. You may contribute online at [www.cfswc.org](http://www.cfswc.org) or [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com), or contact the Community Foundation of South Wood County, 715/423-3863.

***"This is an outstanding program that has truly increased all community capitals: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built. Because of its holistic approach, the Initiative has set a new benchmark of achievement for the civic engagement of community foundations."***

*– Cornelia Butler Flora, Director, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 3/9/05*



## Researching Best Practices



### STUDY TOURS

Exposure to new ideas can often produce powerful local results. Study tours are like “mobile workshops” on the road to explore communities that meet the criteria of best-practice case studies and global opportunities, including successful business development enterprises. By visiting areas that have applied innovative thinking and leadership, the best ideas and successes can be brought back and applied in our community.

During the first year of the Community Progress Initiative, many local residents participated in one or more of the three Study Tours offered. Participants take a guided workshop through specific geographic areas.

Here's a snapshot view of the first year:

### GOING FOR COLLABORATION! Study Tour to Chippewa Valley, Red Wing, and Warrens: September 2004

Embarking on the very first study tour of the Progress Initiative was a team of community volunteers: Marion Ruelle, Bill Lubing, Mayor Jerry Bach, Dick Polansky, Steve Nowicki, Rick Antin, Connie Loden, and Heather Wessling. They visited Chippewa Valley, Red Wing, MN, and Warrens, WI – meeting with mayors, city planners, tourism developers, and business people eager to show them successful ideas that might be adapted in the South Wood County and Rome region.

*Please visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com) > Study Tours for a complete description of this mobile workshop.*



It's obvious from this photo of downtown Red Wing that the city has charm as one of its assets – and no shortage of bustling activity! The photo was taken during the Progress Initiative study tour to enterprising rural communities in the Midwest.

### GOING FOR IDEAS DOWN UNDER! Study Tour to Australia and New Zealand: November 2004

The second Study Tour included four local participants, Arlene Scalzo, Marion Ruelle, Bill Lubing, Connie Loden, and five others from throughout the Midwest. They visited enterprising rural communities in Australia and New Zealand, and came home with solid examples of how community development is the foundation for successful economic development. In the “Land Down Under” these areas made many decisions by looking at their communities holistically – what's good for one business should be good for the entire region.

*Please visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com) > Study Tours for a complete description of this mobile workshop.*



**Bush living at its best!** Study tour participants found best practices for economic and community development in rural areas of Australia and New Zealand in fall 2004. Many more photos from the trip can be found at [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

*“I've always looked forward to ‘change’ – knowing that it's the only constant factor in our society. Participating in the Study Tour to Australia now leads me to now look at an even bigger picture than before. Think big, plan for change, and be adaptable. Thinking globally is advantageous to help you plan and be ready for changes.”*

*– Arlene Scalzo, Australia study tour participant*



**Paper Discovery Center, Appleton, WI:** Bill Van Den Brandt, Corporate Communications of Appleton, points out a flexible packaging process in the paper industry to members of the study tour to the Fox Cities.

### GOING FOR GROWTH! Study Tour to the Fox Cities, WI: February 2005

The third Study Tour was created as a result of discussions within three Industry Clusters. Ten participants from three Clusters –Paper & Forestry Products, Tourism, and Downtown Revitalization– traveled to Appleton to research contemporary developments that are driving innovations in the Fox Valley area. They met with five business leaders that currently operate or created businesses related to the paper and forestry products industry, such as Promo Edge, Precision Paper Converters, and the Paper Discovery Center.

Tour participants were Dale Arendt, Jerry Bach, Jim Bond, Phil Brown, Carol Davis, Al Javorski, Ann Lepak, Dave Pryor, Christine Toutant, and Heather Wessling.

*Please visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com) > Study Tours for a complete description of this mobile workshop.*



# Celebrating Success

## COMMUNITY PROGRESS CELEBRATION

On January 11, 2005 community members and participants in the Community Progress Initiative gathered to celebrate their successes. The Initiative's celebration gave members of Industry Clusters and other Progress Initiative programming an opportunity to showcase their projects and accomplishments. It was a forum to educate the public and inform everyone involved about what was going on in all areas of the Initiative.

*"I think there have been quite a few dedicated people volunteering their time and talents to the Progress Initiative, and they very much are believers in the Initiative. Getting recognition from peers throughout the state is obviously a testament to the power of the programming. I think it might get those who have sat back, wondering, to the point of understanding that this is a legitimate process, and it might get more people involved."*

— Fred Siemers, "Progress Effort Wins Award,"  
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, 4/15/05

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

One aspect of successful community development programs is: "Innovation ... the ability to garner national attention for a broad-based approach to solve problems that face many rural areas." Because the Community Progress Initiative meets this and other standards (listed on page 2), the Initiative is beginning to receive national and regional attention – public forms of validation that citizens are taking the correct approach to improving their communities and economies. Even more important, Initiative recognition helps bring more resources and funding to our programs aimed at bringing positive change to the region!

■ **Small Business Administration, Washington, DC:** March 2005 ... Connie Loden, Heart of Wisconsin Alliance, and Kelly Lucas, Community Foundation of South Wood County, were asked to speak at the 2005 SBA national conference in Washington DC, "The Role of Entrepreneurship in Economic Development." They were chosen based on best practices that demonstrate

market-based results. The Community Progress Initiative was one of only 19 examples to receive national recognition.

■ **Wilmer Shields Rich Award for Excellence in Communications:** April 2005 ... The Council of Foundations, Washington DC, named the Community Progress Initiative as a 2005 bronze award recipient for its printed materials. The awards program recognizes and encourages excellence in communications by grant-making foundations and corporate-giving programs. The award was presented at the 56th Annual Foundation Conference in San Diego.

■ **Wisconsin Top Rural Development Initiative Award:** April 2005 ... Wisconsin Rural Partners presented representatives of the Community Progress Initiative with this award at the Wisconsin Community Leadership Summit in Eau Claire, WI. The award recognizes the Community Progress Initiative's model as a best practice in community development.



Connie Loden and Arlene Scalzo, Heart of Wisconsin Business and Economic Alliance, hold the Progress Initiative's Top Rural Development Award.



**I to r:** Kelly Lucas displays the Wisconsin Community Leadership Award with Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent of Schools, and Jake Close, Chairman of Community Foundation of South Wood County.

■ **Wisconsin Community Leadership Award:** April 2005 ... Community Foundation of South Wood County received this award at the Wisconsin Community Leadership Summit in Eau Claire, WI. The award recognizes the

Community Foundation's role as a catalyst for community improvement projects such as Centralia Center and the Community Progress Initiative.

■ **Town of Rome:** April 2005 ... Rome was honored for its accomplishments with the Community Progress Initiative. Rome was given an honorable mention at the Wisconsin Community Leadership Summit in the Top Rural Development Initiative category. Many communities were nominated for this prestigious award. Rome is committed to continuous improvement and moving forward.



**I to r:** Kelly Haverkamp and Ricky Rolfsmeyer, WI Rural Leadership Program, with Joanne Harmon and Don Fornasiere of Rome.

*"Basically, what we did was nominate the Town of Rome due to all our activities with the Community Progress Initiative. It was just quite an honor to receive the award, and a way to celebrate our successes thus far with the town, and we're going to continue to move it forward. We're not going to stop there."*

— Joanne Harmon, "Rome Honored for Community's Progress toward the Future,"  
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, 4/15/05

make it happen!  
**Community  
Progress  
INITIATIVE**

# Grants and Partnerships


In the first fifteen months, the Community Progress Initiative has received broad support from community partnerships/contributions, as well as private and public grants. The support of the community partnerships/contributions and the private grants has been of particular importance as public grants require matching dollars as just one of their funding requirements. In addition, public grants have very specific spending requirements and will only support certain programs. Public grant monies are only received on a reimbursable basis.

*Public grants received thus far have been used in reimbursement for the following programs:*

- Entrepreneurial Technical Support
- Entrepreneurial Boot Camps
- New Ideas! Speakers

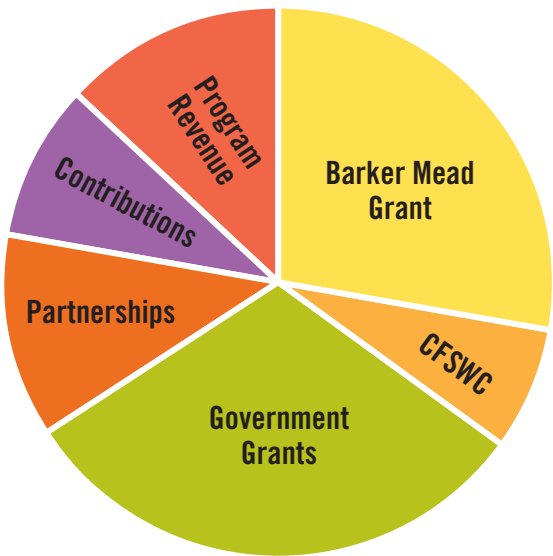
*Future public grant money will be in support of the following programs:*

- Industry Clusters
- Leadership Program, Progress Teams, Youth Team
- New Ideas! Speakers
- Incubator Research
- Revolving Loan Fund



## COMMUNITY PROGRESS INITIATIVE PROGRAMMING SUPPORT

First 15 Months: January 2004-March 2005



Barker Mead Grant	\$75,000
Community Foundation SWC Support	\$17,750
Government Grants	\$83,314
Community Progress Initiative Partnerships	\$31,950
Heart of WI Member Contributions	\$20,684
Program Revenue	\$36,675
<hr/>	
TOTAL YEAR-TO-DATE REVENUE	\$265,373

## COMMUNITY PROGRESS INITIATIVE PROGRAMMING COSTS

First 15 Months: January 2004-March 2005



Entrepreneurial Technical Support	\$57,186
Community Leadership Program	\$32,982
Industry Clusters	\$33,301
Entrepreneurial Boot Camps	\$25,255
Incubator Research	\$10,933
Best Practice Research	\$13,245
Community Progress Teams	\$16,128
Community Rallies/Visioning	\$19,679
New Ideas! Speakers	\$22,519
Conferences/Program Development	\$27,391
<hr/>	
TOTAL YEAR-TO-DATE COSTS	\$258,619

The Community Progress Initiative is a joint initiative between Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance and Community Foundation of South Wood County. Initiative programming relies on funding from both private and public funding sources.

# make it happen! Community Progress INITIATIVE

## Initiative Partners- \$25,000+

- Barker Mead Fund through Community Foundation of South Wood County
- U. S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development
- Wisconsin Department of Commerce with federal Community Development Block Grant funds

## Progress Partner- \$10,000

- Stora Enso North America

## Program Partners- \$5,000

- Daily Tribune
- Mid-State Technical College
- Wood County Telephone Company
- wisrapids.com

## Thank you to our generous supporters.

The Progress Initiative couldn't happen without the help and financial support of many! We are extremely grateful to our sponsors, partners, and contributors. This support helps the Initiative bring quality programs to our residents and business owners; in return, the community is becoming empowered by those who are gaining new knowledge, new skills, and new collaborations to make positive changes happen!

**BARKER • MEAD FUND**  
ESTABLISHED BY RUTH & HARTLEY BARKER AND GILBERT & JAYLEE MEAD

**STORAENSO**

**Daily Tribune**  
wisconsinrapidtribune.com



Please visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com) for a complete list of **Community Partners Plus** and **Community Partners**.

*To become a Progress Initiative supporter, please visit [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com) > Donate.*

## I Want It!

### To get involved:

- Please see the contact people listed in this report.
- Visit [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com).
- Call Heart of Wisconsin Alliance 715/423-1830.
- Call Community Foundation of SWC 715/423-3863.

### To make a contribution

- Visit [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com) for details and online giving.
- Call Community Foundation of SWC 715/423-3863.
- Call Heart of Wisconsin Alliance 715/423-1830.

## I WANT TO HELP "MAKE IT HAPPEN" FOR MY COMMUNITY!

Please add my name to the Initiative mailing list, and send information.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form to:** Community Progress Initiative, P O Box 954, Wisconsin Rapids WI 54495-0954

As a member  
of this community,  
I can "make it happen"



- Create My Future
- Support Local Business
- Encourage Entrepreneurship
- Give to My Community
- Provide Leadership
- Drive Change
- Inspire Others
- Be Positive

