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Using Community Foundation Programs and Grantmaking to Improve

Community and Economic Development Outcomes

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Session Transcript

Connecting Donors with Rural Community and Economic Development

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This session explored messages and methods community foundation leaders have used to engage a range of donors in supporting RDP community economic development programs and grantmaking.

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CONNECTING DONORS WITH RURAL COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JANET TOPOLSKY: How do you get donors to care about giving to rural communities and for rural community economic development? Pass through, endowed, donor advised, discretionary, scholarships: how do you carry the message to donors that it makes sense to create or to dedicate resources to help rural community and economic development? We have brought a few people together who we knew could shed some light on this critical topic.

One of them is Marion Kane, who used to be the president of the Maine Community Foundation; Marion did a keynote at our last peer exchange workshop on covering rural territory where she talked about why rural, why go rural, why do rural—it was an immediate “best seller” and anyone can download it from the RDP website (www.aspencsg.org/rdp).

So we brought Marion back to present us with the overview of this important topic. Each panel speaker – Tom, Elouise and Jennie – will then offer their own unique perspective on how they have worked to connect donors with rural communities. Marion, take it away.

MS. KANE: This is the dreaded after-lunch, time-to-leave slot so we're going to have to put some energy into this to keep you all awake. My task assigned by Janet, *the* taskmaster, was to give you a 20,000-foot overview of ways to engage donors, a range of donors, actually, in rural community economic development.

For the purposes of this conversation, I'm going to define fundraising and donor engagement in rural community economic development very broadly to include scholarship funds and advised funds – all the different tools that community foundations offer because they could all be part of a community economic development strategy as I think you've heard in these last few days.

I want to make one little caveat. I've heard a lot of people dumping on dog and cat neutering funds. I was just reading in the paper coming down the amount of money that we spend in this country on pet food and it's astronomical. It's in billions of dollars. I thought maybe dog and cat neutering funds are actually great ways of freeing up money for other rural community economic development. So that's my pitch for linking these things in strategically ...

Anyway, I wanted to start first by just very quickly going over what all the sources of rural funds can be. Obviously, they're individuals – people who are the current residents of communities, who are residents who moved away from those communities but still think of them as home, and people who've come from away for vacation or have moved in to live in your community.

But keep in mind that each of these different kinds of donors may have very different connections to the community. It was always my observation that people who had moved into the community for summer residence were much more interested in environmental issues, much more interested in community preservation and arts and culture, than

people who had lived and grown up in those communities. They were the ones who tended to be interested in economic and social well-being, not always true but generally so.

Likewise, businesses have a variety of interests in rural communities. These include local businesses which could be big corporations or mom and pop shops and national and regional companies that have branches or divisions in your rural area. It could be a bank, a regional food distributor, a large chain like Wal-Mart, and, finally, businesses that have a stake in the natural resources of your community.

Businesses, I think, more than individuals tend to be focused on this economic well-being of people in the communities and the importance of a skilled and educated work force. They were always the ones we went to when we were looking at education and skills programs.

Finally, you should consider foundations – including local private and corporate foundations, bank trusts, and regional or national foundations that have a connection to your community either through a family member, a fund manager, or issue that they care about. I mentioned at the peer advice session a little bit earlier there are lots of interesting hidden funds, too, in your bank trusts and sometimes in your towns. There are a whole bunch of what were archaically terms “worthy poor” funds in Maine that were controlled by towns that once we unearthed them, we were able to transfer into the community foundation and use for more useful purposes than they were being used by the towns.

So right out of the gate, you can see that there are lots of sources to tap for rural dollars. The challenge is *how to attract and engage them*.

So I framed my thoughts around five messages to donors about giving to rural communities and five methods for finding and engaging them. I'm going to focus mainly on attracting *rural* donors as opposed to donors in urban areas to give to rural because I think they're harder to find.

The *first* message, and I've heard it over and over again in different ways just this morning, is the importance of stressing local control over local dollars. I think rural residents first and foremost care about place and they want to know that their philanthropic dollars will be distributed locally by local folks on improving the communities they care about.

It's often useful to think about the unit of identification that someone connects to. Sometimes it's a town, sometimes it's a county, sometimes it's a region or even a state. In Maine, the northernmost county is our largest county. It's called Aroostook County but in the state it's simply known as The County. If you say you're from The County, everyone knows you're from *Aroostook*.

If you go to Portland, which is the largest city in the state, everyone there says they're from Portland. They don't identify with Cumberland County at all. That may seem like it's a small distinction but it actually makes a big difference in the way you engage those donors and the scope of a fund that they may set up.

The *second* message is to let donors know that you know and understand *rural*. When we started the Maine Community Foundation, the founding director and myself lived in rural Maine. We only wanted to commute about 20 minutes to work so we set up the office in one of the local county seats which is Ellsworth. The early advisers to the foundation all said you'll never be able to raise money from a rural area like that; that's the wrong place to start the foundation.

But in fact it ended up being the most strategic decision we made because we faced none of the big city negatives that come from being located in Portland. It really made a strong statement to the rural communities that we're one of you. It went a long way towards building our credibility.

In addition we found out that there was actually more untapped, and I ought to emphasize untapped, charitable dollars in the rural part of the state than there were in the cities. Much of the money was in family farms, in grocery stores, and all kinds of less visible places but it was there. The local lawyers, accountants, bankers and insurance brokers all know where it is. These folks are "gatekeepers" and can be tremendously helpful in helping you find it.

The owner of one small convenience store in the community where I live recently died. His was a tiny little store and soon after his death, there was a big article in the weekly paper. He left a \$2 million estate to something he cared about in the community. There are lots of that kind of money in rural areas. I always say that wealth doesn't necessarily look like wealth in rural communities – so you have to look with trained eyes. Another related issue is that if you don't have a physical presence in the area that you want to serve, you must be sure to have either local board members, some sort of staff presence, perhaps a circuit riding staff or an affiliate staff and local advisers. You simply can't get to these donors from a long distance away.

The *third* message is that you are in it for the long haul. Endowments in particular are sometimes difficult concepts for rural folks to relate. When the need is so great *today*, it can be difficult to make the case for only spending only interest on principal. On the other hand, when you think about it, the pace of change in rural communities is really quite slow. Many rural residents have lived there for generations and have a habit of naturally thinking in the long term. Position yourself and your foundation as a community steward, as a guardian of the future, as well as a problem solver in the present.

Rural communities, because of their extractive industries have had a long history of being loved and left – so they're slow to love again. Building trust and sticking with communities over the long haul will win you lots of long-term friendships. As a result, you will find bequests appearing on your doorstep that you never even knew or anticipated.

The *fourth* message that I think is important is to tell donors that they can have *more impact* for their dollars because in rural communities a little money goes a long way. Working in a big-city foundation, I have only begun to appreciate how unusual it is to give out a \$2,000 grant and at the end of the grant period get a check for \$52.36 back from an organization representing the money that was left over after the project was completed. That never happens in the urban areas!

In fact, one of the problems we used to have was getting rural communities to spend money! This can be tremendously appealing to donors who are looking for ways to leverage their giving with volunteerism, community involvement and matching donations. I think that the "new philanthropists" who care about impact and actively engage in getting a return on their investments are a perfect match for rural giving. If you can show them how much you can get accomplished with a few dollars, I think they will become impassioned and you will find some active and intelligent partners for your work.

Another benefit of being in a rural community is that you can often get good press coverage on what you're doing that you would not necessarily get in an urban area. Use all those local community newspapers, use all of the little vehicles of communication that there are in rural areas to get the message out. The word spreads very quickly when donors can see and touch what they've invested in.

The *fifth* message is that rural is important because regional success depends on thriving rural communities as well as healthy cities. Some of you who heard me speak before remember the story that I told about one down east woman who captured in a colorful phrase I think the irony of rural communities. She said, "You can't eat the view."

I think there's a lot of wisdom in that. Rural communities are often beautiful places that people love to visit or vacation in but they're tough places in which to make a living. Rural residents are tough and proud. They don't think of themselves as poor and they're often stubborn, averse to change and reluctant to accept or ask for help. So people with wealth who live in those communities may be this way too...they may really need your help in thinking about how to do their giving in a quiet, anonymous way or how to craft a grantmaking strategy that gets funds to places without there being a lot of publicity or noise about it.

Which brings me to five methods for engaging rural donors.

The *first* method is to look at rural communities through local eyes, find connectors and translators. For those of you who have read "The Tipping Point" you know that whole analysis of *connectors* and *translators* and this is very applicable to rural communities.

As I mentioned when I talked about Aroostook County, it's the largest county area-wise in Maine and the most remote. To the untutored eye it looks like it's a lot of poor potato farmers. But I've always said that it's one of the most sophisticated counties in Maine because a lot of those potato farmers are actually commodities brokers and they're out there wheeling and dealing with Wall Street and the Chicago Commodities Exchange... But fund raising there has its own very distinct idiosyncrasies. The first time I ever tried to raise money in Aroostook County I went up and stayed with a board member who was the wife of one of those potato farmers. She and I went out and talked with five or six potato farmers who were also businessmen in the community. We told them about the foundation and we came home and not a single one of them showed any interest or gave us a dime.

We were sitting in her kitchen that night and we were bemoaning the fact that we had had such a bad day and her husband sat there and listened to our pathetic story for a while. Then Ray got up and he got his hat and he went and got in the car and he left. About an

hour later Ray showed up with a check from every single one of the people that we had gone to see that day.

The lesson that I learned that day was that *men give money to men* in Aroostook County, so it was important that we had somebody there who knew the culture and knew how to get things done—well, and who was a man. But cultures vary so much from county to county, you really must learn each one as you go. To do this, you will need local people who can help you navigate those waters.

The *second* method is to use the right tools. When my husband and I moved to Maine from California we had had I think it was about an eighth of an acre lot in Palo Alto and we had one of those hand-push lawn mowers that you use in your back yard. We got to Maine and we were unloading the truck and the local guy who was helping us unload the truck took the hand-push lawn mower, pushed it right down the ramp, and to the end of the driveway to be picked up by the trash company. He said, "This isn't going to be any good in your 5 acres of fields." He was absolutely right.

It strikes me that the same thing applies to our work in rural communities. You need the right tools. One way to discover the right tool is to look at the ways the community operates. If a local school district has a tradition of alumni reunions, find a way to harness that tradition for your fundraising. If county fairs are the major event in your farming community, find a way to get a piece of that action.

Over the years, we partnered with several local grange halls who had a tradition of putting on a harvest feast in the fall. It was a group of residents who'd gotten together and cooked this gourmet meal to serve as a traditional grange supper. Over a period of five years, they raised \$50,000 for a community endowment fund just by having these grange hall dinners. Best of all, they were wonderful, affirming and community-building events as well.

So, don't dismiss grass-roots fund raising because it takes a lot of time and energy. It's really a way of life in rural communities and in the process you may catch the attention of a few donors who have the capacity to give much more.

In addition build the expertise to handle unusual gifts. A great deal of rural money is tied up in real estate and other nonmarketable assets and understanding bargain sales, remainder trusts, conservation easements is important for successful rural fund raising. And, what about gifts like the meteor crater that was gifted to the Arizona Community Foundation or the herd of Angus beef that was given to the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation? You will just need a smart lawyer to help you with those gifts. And, occasionally, you need to know when to turn one down, like the gift that we were offered of a small hydroelectric plant in Maine. We did turn that down. But tools are there. You just need to find them and build your skills so you will know how to work with them.

The *third* method is that good community grantmaking is good community endowment building. When I was the program director for the foundation, I used to raise 40 to 50 percent of the funds that came into the foundation simply by bringing good projects to donors who I know would care about them. Take donors on site visits, open doors they would never have the occasion to go through, bring the stories to them.

In addition, engage donors' talents in the projects and organizations looking for funds. I helped many nonprofits recruit businessmen and donors for the boards of their organizations and over time they became the major donors to those organizations. Sometimes the money flowed through the community foundation, sometimes it didn't, but the important thing was it flowed to the community.

The *fourth* method is to use your connections with regional or national corporations and foundations to secure challenge grants for rural funds. Rural donors like nothing better than to see their local money doubled or tripled by outside dollars. The most successful strategy we actually found in raising money for our rural county funds was to get challenge grants from national or regional foundations and corporations. The cachet of national or a large regional foundation or corporate names also makes a local community feel important and empowered, both key elements in a community revitalization strategy.

And *finally*, make sure you can talk local. I'm going to tell one quick story about Tom. If you've ever called Tom you know that when you get his answering machine in northern New Hampshire you not only get his voice but you get his summary of the current weather in the Mount Washington Valley. This used to annoy the heck out of me when I was in a hurry to leave a message and called Tom. But, I suspect it connects well with the local donors. It's not the slick response that they expect from a fund raiser who's trying to get their money. Weather is of universal concern if you live near Mount Washington and it builds an immediate connection that says I live here, too.

In addition keep in mind that words like "philanthropy," "endowment," "bequests," and the finer points of the charitable world are not current or familiar to rural residents. What *is* familiar are *stories*. When you want to connect with rural communities, tell stories.

So in keeping with that advice I'll turn this program over now to Jenny, Elouise, and Tom so they can share their stories of how they put these methods and messages into action in their own rural communities. Thanks.

MR. DEANS: Thanks, Marion. Let me say first of all it's really been a great pleasure to be here with all of you and coming to sessions like this I always feel like I take away so much more than I can ever share or offer while here. So it's been a great pleasure and, Janet, I thank you for encouraging me to come.

Actually, this assignment was a little difficult. I felt I had a lot of great choices of stories I'd like to share with you so as in many tasks getting it down to one that had some messages in it that might be valuable to share was a challenge.

I want to tell you the story of a man by the name of Wendell Whalen. Wendell Whalen is a sole trustee of a family trust and the reason I tell you this story is that it's not the straightforward kind of story that we usually do in community foundations of going out and talking to somebody and getting a permanent endowment set up ... so let me get on with this round-about tale.

The goals of the family trust are very broad, but it does have a particular focus on rural New Hampshire. Wendell came to us because he had a problem. He wanted to do scholarships. He had talked to somebody in the attorney general's office or somewhere

and they said it was very complicated for him to do scholarship programs. He had heard about the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and that we did scholarships, and so he came to us with his problem and we said we certainly could work on and help him.

Judy Burroughs, who I think is one of the best scholarship and student aid managers in the country, did a wonderful job for Wendell setting up a scholarship program in the small town of Sandwich, New Hampshire, and for a number of years, quite frankly, we sort of forgot about Wendell but knew his scholarship was doing wonderful things for his communities. This was about 12 years ago.

Quite frankly, I don't think we paid much attention to Wendell. He did great rural scholarships and more money trickled into his fund and so we, and not by any design, in fact, it may have even been a mistake, we invited him to some annual meetings and other foundation events. All of a sudden, Wendell started showing up at these. Slowly but surely, and sometimes these things come slowly to me, I said there may be more interest here in what's going on in the community foundation than I first thought.

So after some nice notes back from him on how much he enjoyed the annual meeting, we told Wendell that we were planning to do a donor field trip up to see one of these community building projects in northern New Hampshire. We said: let's invite Wendell, and we did. Sure enough, he showed up with his son and again afterwards, wrote a nice note and asked some questions about what we were doing. I shared some research information we had done and he commented back on that and again expressed great interest.

So, as programs went on we always made a point of involving Wendell and he occasionally would send in an extra check and say really liked that program, and would help out with that particular effort. So on and on grew this relationship with Wendell.

This morning those of you that were in here heard me tell a story about Gorham and Berlin, New Hampshire, where the mills were closed last August and 900 people thrown out of work and just meant disaster for this rural community. So a call came in. A local group up there, Concerned Community Providers, was desperate for resources. We had just gone through our grant cycle and had very little available and I knew we needed some quick, fast money to help get some capital on the table.

So I said, I'm going to call Wendell. I said, Wendell, we need your help. This could really make a huge difference right now if you can help us. He said, Tom, I'll give you \$50,000 to get this started. He said, I know what you're doing; it will work. So we got the \$50,000, we got a number of things started that were really critical to getting the town focused on the long-term strategies rather than the current disaster.

So, I said: well, what the heck? Wendell has already supported us. I'll invite him on this field trip, too. So, along comes Wendell with some other corporate givers. He went in to meet the United Way people and some of the other folks that were struggling with no resources up there and after that I found that he put \$25,000 more into the Concerned Community Providers, to the United Way, and gave us another check for \$25,000 to help the community because he was so impressed with what was going on.

The point of this is that all his commitment was leveraging other dollars all the time. Yankee magazine saw what was going on in the community, put their ad in there. We set up the Berlin-Gorham Community Fund with Wendell's \$25,000, and now local people can make grants to help the needy in that community.

The bottom line on all of this is that, as I mentioned this morning, more than \$500,000 of private dollars has come through to help Gorham and Berlin, and Wendell was one of the *first* people in there and this was just the result of our developing a relationship with Wendell, slowly and over time.

Now, last Friday Wendell and I sat together in the board room of one of New Hampshire's largest banks to hear members of the community up in Gorham and Berlin come down to thank the corporate people and donors that had been so helpful to them and their future. Wendell leaned over to me after that and he said, "What are we going to do next?" Don't you just love it?

So, my hope here is that although Wendell's is not yet a permanent endowment, which is what we all hope for in the community foundations, it is a wonderful partnership and since Wendell is getting older, he may or may not be able to engage his son in wanting to be this trustee. If he doesn't, I know a perfect place where that fund could be managed for the long run.

The last comment I have here is that in the future, I think community foundations may turn to measuring more the amount of dollars *we get out into the communities* rather than the size of our assets. I think there are going to be lots of ways that we may not be necessarily the manager of resources but may definitely be the best vehicle for people to engage in philanthropy and improve their communities—the way Wendell has. So as my parting words, folks: work hard, deliver quality service to donors and to your community, and have fun!

MS. COBELL: Thank you very much. I've known Janet for a number of years. She's made the trip to Montana to the Blackfeet Indian Nation quite a few times. Every time I'm around Janet I always tell her stories and she loves to listen to my stories. So I told this story this morning, and I think I'll continue on with another story.

In Blackfeet country in our culture storytelling is very, very crucial. In fact that's how you learn. Stories are handed down to explain that this is the reason why this happens and this is the reason why that happens.

In our particular culture, we have Napi—and he is the center of many stories. Napi was the creator. He was the Old Man, he was the carrier of wisdom, and we all heard Napi stories when we were young. So I'm going to share one with you today that I think is relevant to a lot of the things that I want to talk about a little bit later.

Before the settlers came into Blackfeet country, you could imagine what the country looked like. The grass was as high as your chest and it was beautiful. Everything was untouched. There were no oil wells, there was no timber being cut down. There were these beautiful Blackfeet encampments. One day, there was this encampment up in the

mountains and Napi was there and he was having a wonderful time and decided that he would take a walk.

In Blackfeet, in our culture, we talk to everybody. Everybody and everything. We worship the sun, who is Natusi. We worship the wind, if you can believe it. The animals are one and the same. We talk to the animals.

So Napi was walking along in this beautiful setting and he came upon these birds. They were doing something very unusual. They were popping their eyes out of their heads and then popping them back in. They were going along and they'd say, "Eyes pop out," and their eyes would pop out and, "Eyes pop in," and their eyes would pop in.

And Napi thought wow, that is really cool so he goes, "Birds, birds, come here. Teach me how to do that." The birds go, "No, Napi, you'll mess it up. You won't do it right. We know you. You never follow instructions very well."

Napi said, "I promise, birds, I promise. If you tell me how to pop my eyes out of my head and pop them in I will do exactly what you tell me."

So he finally convinced the birds that this is the way to go and so the birds taught Napi how to pop his eyes out and pop them back in but they said, "Napi, remember, do not go in thick brush because if you go in thick brush you're in serious trouble." "Don't worry, don't worry. I've got it down."

So Napi went walking along and, "Eyes pop out," his eyes would pop out, "Eyes would pop in," his eyes would pop in. And, "Eyes pop out," and he could see all over from Blackfeet country. He could see Washington, D.C., he could see the Aspen Institute, he could see the Jurys Hotel. He could see all of it. He loved it and then he'd pop his eyes back in.

So then he got to really being engrossed in all this, what he could see all over the place, and so as he walked along and, "Eyes pop out, eyes pop in, eyes pop in, eyes pop in," he realized he had wandered into the brush and his eyes didn't pop back in.

So he was in serious trouble, he was blind, and he had to get back to the encampment, and how was he going to get back to the encampment? So, anyway, he listened and he heard this coyote coming. He goes along and Napi said, "Coyote, Coyote, come here, come here. Loan me one of your eyes."

The coyote said, "Sure, Napi, I'll loan you an eye," and so then he had one eye and he was in pretty good shape, a coyote eye, so his head could maneuver a little bit better back to the camp.

Then he came across this rabbit and so he told the rabbit, "Rabbit, loan me an eye." The rabbit said, "Sure, Napi, I'll loan you an eye." So he lent him a rabbit eye.

So here was Napi, he had one rabbit eye, one coyote eye, and he maneuvered pretty well. When he got back to the encampment, Napi learned that the chief had decided that this was the day that the women were going to choose their husbands. All the men were lined up.

So Napi got in line and he looked a little bit goofy. He had one coyote eye and one rabbit eye. So as the women would come up and they'd choose their husbands they grabbed somebody on the other side of Napi, and he'd run over there and they'd grab some guy on the other side of here and they'd run over there.

It went on like this until nightfall and every man was chosen—except Napi, who was still standing there. He stood there forever until he turned into a tree. So now when you're driving along and you see one lone tree out in a field, that's Napi. He's waiting for somebody to come choose him for a husband.

Believe it or not, there were many lessons to be learned from that story. I think the lessons that I took home was to never judge anybody by the way they look on the outside. Everybody has a certain precious part of them. And, I'd never cut down a lone tree. And, lastly, never abuse power—the way Napi did with those eyes.

I remember I always wanted to marry Napi. We'd be driving along as a kid and I'd tell my folks stop, stop. And I really liked Napi because he was a risk taker. He took risks and I thought that that was what was so cool about him.

But, anyway, I just wanted to share that story with you because I think it does lead a lot of us into our communities in how we are successful and listening to Tom's story and not abusing power.

When we became a Beacon Community as a result of the Montana Community Foundation choosing us, I didn't really realize what could happen, what connections could really be in effect and just continue to happen in our community. We applied and we were the only native community to apply to become a beacon community through the Rural Initiative funded by the Ford Foundation. A few other Montana communities were selected, but we were the only native community selected.

I remember going to the first meetings and sitting down with the other communities and to learn what many of you know how to do, which is to build a community endowment, to build a community foundation. I sat down and there were people that had \$100,000 that they could add right into their endowment immediately!

Well, coming from the community that I live in, where there is not a lot of wealth, to put it just bluntly, you couldn't go up and ask somebody for \$5,000 or you couldn't ask anybody for \$1,000 because, number one, people don't have that kind of money. And number two, people didn't even understand the word "endowment." What do you do to build an endowment?

Montana Community Foundation sent some strategic planners up to meet with members of the community and I remember we had the whole side of a wall plastered with paper saying you can do this; all you have to do is just raise \$54,000 in one year to meet the challenge set forth by the Montanan Community Foundation and the Ford Foundation. I've always been a very optimistic person, but I thought: \$54,000! How can we earn \$54,000?

As we walked out of the room one lady came up and said, "Are you out of your ever loving mind, Elouise? How can you earn \$54,000 for this challenge that you have to meet?"

But not wanting to give up, we continued to work on it. One of those strategic planning people came to me and told me to look into my community and ask: ***What do you have in your community that is an asset that nobody else sees?***

Well, then it finally dawned on me: *our artists*. We're a native community that is totally just filled with talented people as artists. So we came up with this idea, a fund-raising function where the artists would donate their work. We would have this huge function and auction off their artwork. Given the talent that was in our community it would be amazing!

I remember the first year we were a little scared because we had decided to charge 75 bucks a plate for everybody to come in and to be part of this art auction. I went through the telephone book calling everybody and saying do you want to come to this big function?

But the first year, I think we raised something like \$6,000. This was a huge success for us! And so we thought, in the second year, let's do even better! What we did is we live right by Glacier National Park, which is one of the most beautiful areas that you can ever believe. They have these big lodges and a concessionaire comes in and contracts them. I had been out meeting with this concessionaire and saying don't you think it's about time you give something back to the community instead of when winter comes along as they just flee or become snow birds you ought to give some of the money that you're making back to the community. It was, like, impossible to convince them that they should.

The concessionaire said: Well, Elouise, if you'll get the tribe to do away with some of the taxes then I'll do it.

I continued to educate him that I wasn't the tribe, I was only an individual just like he was, and we're all part of the community.

The second year when it rolled around this particular concessionaire said you know what, I'm going to give you a lodge and you can hold this function at this lodge. And from that point, it just became a wonderful annual event. We're probably sold out now for this year's and we have netted, like, \$40,000 in one night. Now it is the concessionaire, that particular person who is *part of the community*, who has now become one of the driving forces in this event.

Like I said, there are many people that really didn't understand endowments and what does an endowment mean. I got this one woman that used to come to my office and she would seal bead work. One day she had these really pretty little teepees that she made. I said you know what, can you make 300 of those tepees and she said well, yeah, and I said because we'll buy them and we'll use them for our fund raiser for our endowment. So she got engaged and now she's part of it. She understands endowment and how it has related to her and that is how the community becomes educated—one by one.

Like I told this morning to the group is now we start at the young people and they have an endowment. So we have our own Blackfeet Community Endowment that is managed by the Montana Community Foundation. We have the young people that started their own endowment. It's the Magic in Their Hands Endowment.

Then we have the language school. We have this really important initiative to be able to bring back the language into our community, the Blackfeet language. They didn't want to take any government money. They didn't want to take any public school money because they knew that people would start dictating the way that they teach the Blackfeet language.

So we talked about let's fund raise for an endowment for you; let's get an endowment started for the language school. So we have another endowment for the language school and because we had that one opportunity to become a beacon community the spotlight was on us and we became very successful.

What it did is it brought funders to us because everything we did was a success. Everything we worked on was a success. Not that we yet have millions of dollars in our endowment. I mean, that would be the day. I would just love to have \$10 million in an endowment! And, it will happen...some day.

But there's a totally different *outlook* by our community and I think that when people said: Are you out of your ever loving mind, it will never happen! But, it happened. And when it happens it really builds your faith that you *can* make something happen.

... But I think the entire "mind change" of saving for the future so if you have something wonderful in your community that you can sustain it. So it won't go away when the government decides they're not going to appropriate any more money for something wonderful. You have an endowment and you want to continue to sustain it and the community it supports

The other part that I really want to share with you, as we continued to be spotlighted on we were very fortunate because we weren't developed that much on the east side of the mountains right on the Rocky Mountain Front. It was the west side of the mountains where there wasn't any wind that got really developed.

We were fortunate on the east side because nobody wanted to develop there because we have such high winds. But it also gave us the ability to recognize that we had some of the most pristine plants that exist only in our area, nowhere else in North America, the plants that had been there for, I don't know, a zillion years, some of the best Rocky Mountain front that was in existence.

So we struck a relationship with the Nature Conservancy to form the first land trust ever in Indian country, basically the first Nature Conservancy, and the Nature Conservancy came in and said we'll help you. We'll be hand and hand with you and we can put a plan together so we understand how important it is to protect the environment but actually and compatible with development because we'd love to have it stay the same forever but we have to have some sort of development for the economic uses.

So immediately what happened is a 1,200 acre ranch came up for sale that was owned by a non-Indian and the person had passed away so his wife wanted to sell it. We were able to raise enough money to buy a 1,200-acre beautiful ranch where the grizzly bears, the aspen, and some of the most pristine plants are wonderful.

We began raising money for that and within a period of time we had enough money to buy *another* million-dollar acreage but then we also coupled it with an endowment so that we can sustain the costs of it.

So it just continues to go on, just very wonderful. If we hadn't had the opportunity through the Rural Initiative, through the Montana Community Foundation wanting to put this initiative out there, would we have ever gotten there? I don't know. I don't think so. I think we needed that boost but it surely connected the entire state with an Indian community.

We have a real strong bond with the Montana Community Foundation and other people, with the Ford Foundation, with the Kellogg Foundation, the Lannan Foundation. I think that foundations love to see that success. They love to see how their money works in rural communities that are really in need.

So that's pretty much the story that I have to share. I think somebody said it earlier, you never give up, you continue to work very hard to build your community because you're a part of it and you're the one that can make it very successful. Thanks.

MS. STEPHENS (via video): I'll say that I wish I could have been here rather than taping this because I don't like being on camera but I just wanted to share with you the opportunity we had of bringing a donor in the rural fold rather than focusing on one particular county which has a lower poverty level than its neighbors.

I'll start off by talking about the donors, a retired couple. This particular couple approached us and wanted to give us \$9 million. So, as I said earlier on today, that we were not serving the area that they wanted us to serve so we pretty quickly had an incentive to begin to look at possibly serving the area so we started doing some research. They had lived up north, they had a private foundation that they felt was a lot of work. They had just moved in this area that they were not familiar with it, so they wondered how they could figure out the needs in the community and make sure we address those.

Now, how did we first connect with them? Their professional advisor actually knew The Community Foundation for Coastal South Carolina's lawyer and knew the work that that lawyer had done with the community foundation. So their professional advisor thought that working with the community foundation would be a good choice for them. They could have a donor advised fund, still have the control that they liked, and have an organization that was more familiar with the community would be able to provide the service for them and that's what they liked.

What did they originally want to do? They originally wanted to serve only Beaufort County. So, as I said earlier on today, we started doing some research and when we started looking at the statistics and the poverty level and all the other problems in the three surrounding counties we said hey, let us show you this. This may be worthwhile to expand your fund to serve these additional three rural counties in addition to Beaufort.

Well, you probably don't know the county situation in South Carolina but Hilton Head Island is a piece of Beaufort County. So, to some extent it actually skews the numbers. There's poverty in Beaufort County but there's also a lot of wealth.

So we tried to convince the couple that their very large fund should serve the three neighboring, more poverty-stricken counties around Beaufort County. We took the donors on little road trips through the neighboring counties which is when the donors' eyes were opened. So it was let's look at Beaufort but let's drive over here where the people who work in Beaufort who don't get any benefits or much pay live, and that really was an eye opener for them. And the donors said, okay—let's apply the fund to these surrounding counties as well.

One of the things I liked about these particular donors is that they wanted to remain anonymous throughout this process, but they also wanted to establish a competitive grant program and have an advisory community overseeing the process. Initially it was the husband and wife with their friends, but now it actually has turned into a representative committee with folks from all four counties. Since 1998, it is now made up of about half friends and half community folks. Approximately \$800,000 has been given out through their fund.

Environment and education were going to be their two focus areas but then when they started to see there was such greater human needs and health and neighborhood and community development that they began to consider those proposals.

What resources emerged from this? As I said, they have given us \$9 million and they also have a bequest in which I'm not sure what the dollar amount is but they have committed to improving not just Beaufort County but also the three rural areas and as a matter of fact, the husband of the donor team told us when another private family foundation converted to a fund at our community foundation and they wanted to serve a county that's not in our service area but the husband, as I said, of that team said well, why didn't we think about serving them also because this is, like, the top county in the State of South Carolina when it comes to poverty, the educational attainment levels, lack of industry, all of those things. So that may be something down the road that they may want to consider doing.

Lessons learned? Well, we found that when we took the opportunity to work closely with the donors and help them see other possibilities, they responded. A lot of times people will say well, this is what the donor wants and I'm not going to try to change their minds. But I think that's a disservice because they what they really want from a community foundation is one-on-one service and the opportunity to learn and the knowledge that their money is being utilized to its fullest potential.

In listening to donors, just as you listen to communities, you will learn what their needs are and what they want from a fund. But, you will also learn where you can help them see the needs of a community where they might not have seen them otherwise. You have that opportunity.

MS. TOPOLSKY: I want to thank Jenny, Tom, and Elouise for those wonderful stories. It occurs to me that what they all have in common is that they're about kindling hope in rural communities. So I think raising money can be as useful a tool in doing that as giving away grants. It is great work. **ADJOURNED.**