

## Community Fund To Begin Fund Drive Campaign...

# Touch The Lives Of Others Through Fund Drive Gifts

By: Pam Aakre

For over 15 years, the Barnesville Area Community Fund has been making a difference by touching people's lives. This is possible as a result of the generous financial support of hundreds of Barnesville individuals, organizations, businesses and the City of Barnesville.

"There is no walk of life that is not represented by the Community Fund," says Chairman Sean Wahl. "From the loans distributed through the Revolving Loan Fund to the awarding of scholarships to BHS graduating seniors to the financial support community members provide whenever there is a benefit for someone in need, to contributing money via the Grants Fund or the School Foundation, the Community Fund is proud to make Barnesville a better place to live, work or play."

In order for the Barnesville Area Community Fund to continue their tradition of touching the lives of others, a month long major fund drive will kick off on September 30.

During the month of October, approximately 45 solicitors will be making face to face contacts with community residents asking them to consider making a financial gift to the Barnesville Area Community Fund. These monies, combined with lead donor gifts, contributions received through a mailing to BHS alumni and past donors, as well as pledges received from a phone-a-thon at the end of the month, will be used to improve the quality of life and strengthen the sense of community in the Barnesville area.

The Community Fund has a successful track record of fulfilling its purpose. The Community Fund

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began in 1990 with a single program of a Revolving Loan Fund through the Economic Development Authority. In the past 18 years, \$111,333 in low interest loans has been provided through the Barnesville Revolving Loan allowing 11 businesses to start or expand. EDA Director and Community Fund staff Karen Lauer noted that the Community Fund has only had to write off \$3,073 in loan losses.

She added that repayments enable additional community businesses to benefit from the same Community Fund revolving loan program. The EDA monitor this portion of the Community Fund.

Over the last 20 years, Dollars for Scholars, one of the five pockets within the Barnesville Area Community Fund, has awarded over \$140,000 in scholarships to aid BHS seniors with their post-secondary education expenses.

Since 1996, the Community Fund has distributed \$117,388 to 18 area families who have suffered a variety of medical crises and/or natural disasters.

From 1996-2007, the Community Fund awarded 102 grants totally \$119,354 to Barnesville area non-profit organizations. Grant recipients vary from city services to Barnesville parks, from youth development to the

school district. There are other community projects that have also benefited from the Community Fund grants.

The success from the past two fund drives has been used to fulfill the requests made by the five different committees within the Community Fund. "We are excited about the potential to add to our fund," says Wahl. "It's great knowing that all of the money generated

locally is given back directly to the community."

From an initial gift of \$15,000 from the City of Barnesville in 1990, the Barnesville Area Community Fund has grown to be one of the most successful community funds in the region with assets of \$604,860.

The Barnesville Community Fund is a part of the West Central Initiative Fund. Under the direction of a 13-member advisory board, funds are distributed as grants to local non-profit groups, scholarships to graduating seniors and loans to assist businesses. Approximately 45 individuals volunteer their time to serve at the committee level.

Emphasizing that the Community Fund is your fund, not any one person's or group's fund, Wahl says, "The community owns the fund to do things for the community."

Past experience proves when people work together for the good of the community, a feeling of pride and ownership and unity takes over.

For the 18 years, the Barnesville Area Community Fund has made a difference in the lives of people, organizations and businesses in Barnesville. With your support the Community Fund will be able to continue to make a difference by touching the lives of many.