



Fort Foundation Focus

by Fred A. Rose, Volunteer Publicist

www.fortfoundation.org

In a previous column I observed that the combination of the Fort Atkinson Community Foundation's (FACF) wise original organization, its generosity, and its wise methods of analyzing the worthiness of projects sets it apart from the majority of community foundations. All of these things make the Foundation a special part of this community. But, if you think about it, there is even more to it than that.

The FACF began in 1973. An anonymous person wanted to donate \$25,000 to the city, but found it was lacking an organization to handle general donations. As a result, this non-profit organization was founded. The founding individual also realized that the future needs of a community cannot always be anticipated, a wise observation, but one not always obvious to potential benefactors. The Foundation was created to have a continuously evolving leadership (board of directors) of knowledgeable and caring people who have been involved in the community. The FACF is a great asset to the community!

Let me give you an example of what can happen without such a Foundation in the community. I could not establish the exact dates, but somewhere around 40 or 50 years ago a significant amount of money was bequeathed to the city of Whitewater for the building of a hospital. Of course, as we all know, that has never happened. After many years, the matter was taken to court for resolution, and the court ruled that the accrued funds could be used to build a nursing facility. Some land on the east side of Whitewater was acquired for the project, but the additional funds needed to build the facility could not be raised.

After some more years, back to the courts. This time, the court decided that the land and money could be given to the Whitewater Rescue Squad. The community was finally able to make use of this generous donation, but this was somewhere between 20 and 30 years later! The original bequest had grown to over \$250,000, plus the land. All of those resources just sitting there, unused, for all that time! Of course, Whitewater does have a foundation now, but it would have been so much more helpful if it had been

available "back-then."

As you might suppose from this story, one advantage of a wisely chartered community foundation is that it can have the power to redirect a well intentioned but obsolete set of instructions by a donor. The wasted time, lost opportunities, and the frustration experienced by Whitewater can be surmounted. Of course, the experience and expertise of such a foundation in providing suggestions to potential donors about how to word such directed funds is also invaluable.

Let me cite an example here in Fort. In 1997 a modest amount was donated to the FACF to eventually fund a "youth-drop-in center" which was intended to be an after school activity. Over the years, those funds grew. Meanwhile, however, a great deal of study and a large designated donation from a generous anonymous donor enabled the Foundation, in 2005, to lead the formation of the Boys and Girls Club of Fort Atkinson. Continued funding for that project is now accomplished through additional donations from the original donor, contributions from that *youth-drop-in center* fund, major donations from local corporations and citizens, and fund raising events. Nice! The intent of that original donor is preserved, but accommodates a shifting landscape.

The Foundation has grown over the years and has been enriching the city's culture, style-of-life, and landscape ever since. In the last fiscal year the Foundation paid over \$1,998,000 in grants to community projects plus another \$186,000 in scholarships! You might consider making this great community of Fort Atkinson even stronger by putting the Foundation on your list of annual donations, or think about including it in your estate plan.

Anyone needing more information, or who would like to make a donation to the Fort Atkinson Community Foundation, is asked to contact Helen Rose, Program Administrator, at 920-563-3210 (office), 920-563-4926 (home), or visit the Foundation's Web site at www.fortfoundation.org.