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Community Foundation Announces Distribution of Immediate Assistance Fund *Five local organizations to benefit*

Medicine Hat, Alberta (March 30, 2010) – After several months of collecting donations from the community, the Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta today announced the distribution of the Immediate Assistance Fund. The fund is valued at \$15,000 and will be distributed to five separate charities in the area.

The fund was created in June 2009 in response to the plethora of local residents in urgent need of assistance with life's basic needs during the continuing economic crisis. The fund was not endowed and held in perpetuity as most Community Foundation funds are; rather, money raised is being dispersed into the community immediately.

Organizations obtaining grants through the Immediate Assistance Fund did not apply through an application process. Instead, board members and grant committee volunteers have scoured the community looking for the best use of the resources.

“The Community Foundation’s volunteers did a brilliant job using their connections and resources to find where these charitable dollars will do the most good,” said executive director Mike Christie. “We feel that these organizations will touch a great deal of the people who need help the most right now.”

The fund will be distributed as follows:

Medicine Hat and District Food Bank: \$5000 to be used primarily for children in programs such as Healthy Bundles and Snack Attack.

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St. Vincent de Paul: \$5000 general assistance for those most in need.

Dream Centre: \$2000 to be used for DC Lunch Box program.

Salvation Army: \$1500 to be used for transportation purposes (bus passes, taxi rides to job interviews).

Volunteer and Community Information Centre: \$1500 to be used for transportation of clients. As an information and referral centre, these funds will assist a number of people in getting to and from the centre to obtain the services they need.

Dr. Shann Snedden, chair of the Community Foundation's board of directors, said the board is pleased with the outcome of the fund.

"This was a new venture for the Community Foundation, and we were thrilled that our supporters believed in the idea of the fund and donated to us," she said. "Their donations have enabled us to help thousands of people in our region through a variety of programs."

The distribution of these grants does not signal an end to the Immediate Assistance Fund; the board of directors has decided to keep the fund open so that future disbursements can be possible.

"There are so many people in our community who want to help those in need," said Snedden. "By donating to this fund, they know they are touching the people who need it most. Donation dollars are used very effectively when contributed to a pool such as this."

Christie pointed out that the Community Foundation is uniquely poised to understand the community's greatest needs in situations such as the continuing economic crisis.

"Our work in the area of community leadership enables us to see and hear how our region's charitable organizations are faring," he said. "Specifically, the ground-level research we do with our yearly Vital Signs publication allows us to see the community under a sort of microscope. Many people do not realize the extent to which these charities have been hurting in the past year."

The initial distribution of the Immediate Assistance Fund will take place today. Donors are encouraged to further contribute to the fund by visiting the office at 430-6th Ave. SE, room 104, or by calling the office at (403) 527-9038.