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Community Foundation unveils Immediate Assistance Fund *Spring 2009 designated grants also announced*

Medicine Hat, Alberta (June 17, 2009) – In continuing its tradition of community support and assistance, the Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta today announced the creation of the “Immediate Assistance Fund.”

The fund has been created in response to the plethora of local residents in urgent need of assistance with life’s basic needs during the continuing economic crisis. Money raised for the fund will be immediately directed to local charities for appropriate disbursement.

“Our local charities are working harder than ever to meet the needs of citizens in crisis,” said board chair Dr. Shann Snedden. “The Community Foundation is responding to concerns by providing flow-through donations to these front-line charities.”

Snedden also commended the work local charities have done to guide people through these difficult times.

“The economic downturn is negatively affecting people’s livelihoods, and when those same people require support, it is very often local charities they turn to,” she said. “However, these charities are facing increasing pressures on their resources and on their ability to raise desperately needed additional funds. The Community Foundation is well poised to know which charities are most significantly impacted and where assistance can be best directed.”

The Immediate Assistance Fund is set up differently than the Community Foundation’s endowment funds. Traditionally, money raised by the Community Foundation is endowed and held in perpetuity then disbursed in semi-annual grant cycles.

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“The money raised through this fund will not be endowed but will be disbursed immediately into the community,” said executive director Mike Christie. “We will use our leadership skills, granting expertise and community know-how to direct the money properly. We will ensure that all funds brought in will be used for those most in need in our area.”

The new fund was started by the Community Foundation’s own board of directors, who made personal contributions to kick-start the fund. Supporters of the Community Foundation were also vocal about wanting to help families in need during the harsh economic climate, but didn’t know which organization to turn to.

“There are so many people who want to help,” Christie said. “But many of them are unsure of where to start. We are pleased to be able to direct these funds to the local organizations that are most in need.”

The Immediate Assistance Fund was announced at the occasion of the Community Foundation’s 17th anniversary, celebrated with a Founder’s Day Picnic on the terrace of the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre. It is the tenth annual event.

“We have a record turnout this year,” Christie said. “Over 80 of our supporters have joined us this afternoon to enjoy the view from the Esplanade terrace and hear an update on the great things the Community Foundation continues to do for the community.”

The Community Foundation announced over \$28,000 in designated grants that were delivered this spring (see attached). The total included over \$20,000 in scholarships that were given to students in six different school districts.

“Although we suspended the majority of our granting in 2008 given the economic climate, we have still been able to hand out over \$45,000 in pre-determined designated grants in the last year,” Christie said. “Many organizations in the area we serve have benefited from these grants, and we will continue to do our very best in making a positive impact in our community.”

For more information, please contact Mike Christie at (403) 527-9038.