

## **2003 Annual Report Executive Summary**

### **Clare County Enterprise Community**

#### **January 2003**

The Annual Meeting saw increased interest in the open seats on the CCEC Board of Directors. Because of this increased interest, the Board decided to expand the number of directors from eighteen to twenty-one. When the election was complete, twenty seats were filled with all census tracts represented except for 9809. It was decided that the nominating committee would run another round of notices in the local newspapers, advertising for a representative from census tract 9809 and authorize the chair to appoint a twenty-first director if a candidate were to become available. As the County continued to work on the issue of scrap tire storage, a request was put forward citing benchmarks number 2.1 and 3.1 asking for the support of CCEC. A resolution of support was adopted and a successful grant request was funded by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. CCEC continued to support the Heart of Michigan Planning Group through benchmark 22 in the quest to bring high-speed wide-band Internet access to Rural North-Central Michigan. To check the progress of this project please refer to [www.heartofmi.org](http://www.heartofmi.org). CCEC partnered with USDA Rural Development, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Michigan Department of Transportation and Michigan State University Extension to present a Community Development Forum for nearly forty local governmental units.

#### **February 03**

CCEC Board of Directors elected its executive committee for the year. Once the chair was seated, he appointed a director to represent census tract 9809. This meant all census tracts and developable sites were represented. The Board decided to retain consultant services on an annual basis to assist with the administrative functions of CCEC. After much discussion and deliberation it was decided to move forward with plans to host a Group WorkCamp during the summer of 2004. This project aligns very nicely with the intent of benchmark 18.4. The United Way & Volunteer Center of Clare County (Volunteer Center created and seed funded through benchmark 10.1) has agreed to be benchmark leader and champion of this project. Through benchmark 4.1 scholarships were offered to each of the three schools districts of Clare County to participate in the Character Counts! Seminar "Pursuing Victory with Honor-Ethics in Sports." In order to better address the tasks of benchmarks 18.1 & 18.7 a partnership was formed with Mid Michigan Community Action Agency, the County's only CHODO, to complete a housing study in census tracts 9803, 9808 and 9809 to better assess the affordable housing needs of those areas. Benchmark 12.2 has experienced many challenges finding a location to establish a Community Farmers' Market. Gateway Farmers' Market, the City of Clare, and several local producers have agreed to jointly construct a multi-purpose pavilion at Shamrock Park to house a Farmers' Market, as well as host numerous other community activities.

### **March 03**

The staff of Middle Michigan Development Corporation made a formal presentation to CCEC regarding the activities and accomplishments of benchmarks 11.5, 11.3, 11.2 & 11.1. Clare County asked for financial assistance with the scrap tire clean up process. Because of the threat of the West Nile Virus, it was determined that mosquito control would be required for the project to progress in the spring. This was a cost that was not anticipated. CCEC pledged \$5,000 in support of the project as it met the intent of benchmarks 2.1 & 3.1. The Clare County Housing Commission offered to host the Revolving Loan Fund as was proposed in the CCEC application of 1999. CCEC accepted the offer and acknowledged Clare County Housing Commission as benchmark leader for benchmark 18.1. Plans are moving forward for the construction of a multi-purpose pavilion in the City of Clare which will provide a home for Phase I of the Community Farmers' Market project. Discussions continue between the CCEC Board of Directors and a Michigan State University graduate student regarding using CCEC as a case study for his dissertation, designed to provide a mid-term evaluation of the CCEC strategic plan.

### **April 03**

CCEC spent a great deal of time examining the partnership with Women's Aide Services, Inc. who operates the local domestic violence shelter, established in conjunction with benchmark 14.1. It was determined to extend financial support to years three and four of the strategic plan. It was also decided, CCEC would establish a workgroup to assist WAS, Inc. with fundraising and the development of a plan of sustainability. The Chair appointed four CCEC Board members to serve in this workgroup. This matter will be discussed in greater detail in the sections of this report entitled "Problems/Obstacles" and "Solutions." CCEC established a partnership with Eastern Michigan University to make application to the Federal Department of Commerce for a T.O.P. grant to develop an economic development tool based on GIS mapping. Farwell Area Schools agreed to house and feed the participants of our summer 2004 Group WorkCamp. CCEC was invited to participate in Clare County's strategic planning process which was facilitated by Michigan State University Extension.

### **May 03**

The CCEC bylaws committee presented proposed changes, to the bylaws, to accommodate the increased number of directors' seats established at the Annual Meeting. The benchmark committee brought several months' work to closure with the completion of a Funding Benchmark Chart completely obligating funds through year four. CCEC received unofficial word that the Early Warning Siren System grant prepared in conjunction with benchmark 22 was to be funded; official notification was expected within sixty days and installation could begin. In accordance with guidelines as outlined by the Office of Community Development, CCEC Board of Directors participated in Board training which was facilitated by Ghulam Sumbal of the USDA Rural Development Office of Michigan.

### **June 03**

Good News! CCEC was notified that President Bush appointed Dale Sherwin State Director of USDA Rural Development-Michigan. It was also learned, that funding for year five was authorized in the amount of \$247,829. This was only \$2,171 less than expected which meant implementation could continue once the grant agreement was signed. The newly created Parks and Recreation Commission, established in conjunction with benchmark 5.1, presented CCEC with a proposal to continue the partnership and extend funding at the same level for two additional years. The CCEC Board accepted the proposal and earmarked \$20,000 for each of the next two years. Rural Partners of Michigan partnered with CCEC for two activities. First, Rural Partners and CCEC combined resources to host a prescription drug forum. Second, Rural Partners invited CCEC to participate in their summer retreat and assist with the development of the plan of work for the coming year. Benchmark 22 continues to guide the activities of the Clare County LinkMichigan Initiative. In an effort to keep Michigan Legislators informed of our progress, a legislative update was scheduled by The Heart of Michigan Planning Group at the State Capitol. This activity was very well attended and received by our legislators.

### **July 03**

Benchmark 12.2-Gateway Farmers' Market becomes a reality. After four years of hard work and challenges too many to mention, the Gateway Farmers' Market opened for business. A ribbon cutting celebration hosted by CCEC was well attended by those who have had a part in bringing this project to fruition. The Gateway Farmers' Market Board of Directors were joined by officials from the United States Department of Agriculture, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, City of Clare, representatives of both the Amish and English farming communities, and many citizens at the dedication of the City of Clare's Shamrock Park multi-purpose pavilion. Long term plans for the Farmers' Market are to move it to a permanent site on other City owned property adjacent to the airport, probably for year three of operation. The most highly prioritized benchmark at the time of the development of the strategic plan was benchmark 1.1, which called for the development of a coordinated county-wide land use plan. It quickly became evident that training for volunteer planning commissioners was needed. There are twenty local units of government in Clare County, none of whom employ a certified planner. Michigan State University Extension facilitated a planning session to organize a three county initiative to offer the Citizen Planner Training Program. It was decided there was sufficient interest and resources to bring the Citizen Planner Program to Clare County.

### **August 03**

CCEC was pleased learn that training was going to be available for volunteer planning commissioners. They reviewed the language of benchmark 1.1 and decided to offer a scholarship to each unit of local government so at least one of their planning officials could participate in the training. It was hoped that each unit of government would also be able to provide the tuition for one planning official so each unit of government would have the benefit of two trained volunteer planners. The CCEC workgroup that was appointed to assist with the funding of our local domestic violence shelter kicked off their first fund raising project, a "letter of appeal" which was well accepted by the community. The City of Harrison and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources dedicated their new fire facility funded by the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities loan/grant program.

### **September 03**

Grant signing for year five funds takes place giving CCEC the go ahead to continue implementation of the strategic plan. As was mentioned earlier in this report, funding for year five was authorized at just slightly less than the anticipated \$250,000. CCEC used the celebration of the grant signing to present the CCEC Progress Report covering the period August 1999-August 2003 to attending citizens, officials and the media. The public relations plan calls for distribution of the Progress Report to every household in Clare County. This will require the printing of 18,000 copies and determining the best and most cost effective method of distribution. USDA Rural Development State Office of Michigan is exploring ways they might help with this initiative. It was learned that three members of the CCEC Board of Directors have been accepted to participate in the first Harrison Area Chamber of Commerce Leadership Institute. It was also learned that Sharon Jeffery, CCEC Housing Advocate, was the 2003 recipient of the National Extension Outreach Award for her very aggressive efforts in promoting home ownership. Officials of CCEC and Redding Township traveled to Breckenridge, Michigan to accept a \$100,000 economic impact grant award to assist with the construction of a new Community Center/Township Government Center. Construction of this badly needed facility is expected to begin in the spring of 2004.

### **October 03**

The first draft of the Clare County Master Plan (benchmark 1.1) is reviewed by the planning commission. Discussions took place with Eagle Crest Homes of Farwell, USDA Rural Development, and CCEC regarding the development of senior housing in the CCEC Developable Site in the Village of Farwell which also has been designated as a State of Michigan Renaissance Zone. Renaissance Zones allow for the forgiveness of State taxes through the year 2014. This would be of great benefit to residents as they would be exempt from both State income tax and local property taxes. CCEC facilitated a meeting between two of its partners Hard Times Café (HTC) and UADA Rural Development. In the year 2000, CCEC provided funding for HTC to expand its operations to include an automotive business and training center. After two and one half years of many unanticipated challenges and expenses, HTC needed to revise its business plan by dropping their automotive business/ training center, in order to survive. There was a concern by HTC that their revised business plan might not meet the requirements of the USDA-RD Rural Business Opportunity Grant used to purchase the building that houses their organizational headquarters, training center, and resale business. It was determined by USDA Rural Development that the purpose and mission of the organization still met the intent of the grant and that operations could continue as outlined in their revised business plan.

### **November 03**

Supported by benchmark 18.7, USDA Rural Development and CCEC have partnered to address the affordable housing needs of the residents of Clare County. Because of the diligent efforts of USDA Rural Development and CCEC housing advocates, it was reported to the CCEC Board of Directors that 75% of all prequalification applications processed in our thirteen county region came from Clare County. This translates into many families achieving the American dream of home ownership. Completion of Phase I of the Community Resource Directory Project was marked in September with the distribution of the Community Resource Directory to the service providers of Clare County; plans for phases II and III of the project were now underway. A more complete discussion of this project is included in the section of this report entitled "Most Significant Accomplishment." It appears that the perfect outgrowth of this project is that of establishing a 211 call center for the residents of County. To that end, discussion has begun locally, as well as participation in state-wide conference calls and meetings. The LinkMichigan study is coming to closure with final editing taking place and preparations being made for the presentation of the plan to the community.

**December 03**

As year four comes to a close, energies are focused on year five. Harrison Community Schools found it necessary to close a school building this year due to declining enrollment. The community is very interested in what will become of the building. Two of the many suggestions are to use it for a vocational education center or turning it into an assisted living facility. Both of these uses align with benchmarks contained in the CCEC strategic plan. Discussions are underway between officials of Harrison Community Schools, CCEC and private developers regarding these two possibilities. If it were to be used as a vocational education center, it appears that Qualified Zone Academy Bonds could be used for refurbishing the facility. The Harrison Area Economic Development Corporation has renewed its interest and support of developing an assisting living facility in the county with the pledge of \$5,000 to be used as matching funds of a grant application to complete a feasibility study. With all of these projects coming to the forefront at the end of the year, it appears that next year's priorities have already begun to be established.