

Community Foundation launches Advancing DeKalb County initiative

Published: Thursday, May 29, 2014 11:44 p.m. CDT • Updated: Friday, May 30, 2014 12:37 a.m. CDT



Caption
(Andrea Azzo – aazzo@shawmedia.com)

By ANDREA AZZO - aazzo@shawmedia.com

SYCAMORE – The DeKalb County Community Foundation's newest initiative involves asking local officials and county residents to contribute in what they're calling a collective impact effort.

The initiative, called Advancing DeKalb County, is connecting the private, public and nonprofit sectors to find out what residents in the county consider key issue areas. Officials are working with Northern Illinois University's [Center for Governmental Studies](#) and will use their results to allocate grant money for one or two projects geared toward improving quality of life.

"The goal of something like this is to try to bring everything together into one place," Dan Templin, DeKalb County Community Foundation executive director, said.

[DeKalb County Community Foundation](#), 475 DeKalb Ave., Sycamore, formally launched Advancing DeKalb County on Thursday with a PowerPoint presentation and guest speaker Maureen McHugh,

the former executive director of DuPage County Health Department who helped launch a similar collective impact effort in DuPage County.

DeKalb County will distribute a countywide survey June 18, when they will send postcards asking residents to take the survey online and pick what they consider to be the top three issues. The survey will then take those issues and create sub-issues residents can address, Diana Robinson, director of NIU's Center of Governmental Studies, said .

The survey will also allow local municipalities to add questions that only residents in that specific town will answer, Templin said.

The community foundation has a total of \$44 million in assets. It distributes about \$1.3 million a year through grant programs. Advancing DeKalb County is a unique initiative because it is a proactive method of providing grants, similar to the foundation's Community Works initiative, Templin said.

"We want help from the community to identify what these opportunities are," he said.

There are three phases for Advancing DeKalb County. Templin said it may take between a year and a year and a half to decide what projects should be the focus of funding.

DuPage County's Impact DuPage chose to focus on the safety net of the Affordable Care Act as its main issue. Officials there formed partnerships with organizations such as hospitals to get higher participation in the federal health care act.

McHugh said DeKalb County officials need to figure out what issues impact them most.

"What works for one community may not work for another," McHugh said. "You have to practice on your own."

Advancing DeKalb County will have a community dashboard on its website, where people can track the initiatives and their progress through a shared measurement system, said Anita Zurbrugg, DeKalb County Community Foundation program director.

Micki Chulick, a DeKalb County Community Foundation board member, said the foundation still has a lot of work to do after getting local municipalities on board.

"Our time is now," Chulick said. "This is exactly when we need to be doing this."

What's next

DeKalb County Community Foundation will distribute a countywide survey June 18 asking residents to pinpoint three key issues in the area. Officials will convene for a summit Sept. 18 to discuss the survey results.