

GCF Highlights Its Donors and Recipients in Warner Hall Reception

BY CHARLIE KOENIG

It was a chance to recognize donors for their charitable contributions. It was also an opportunity to shine a light on local non-profit organizations that are making a real difference. But most of all, it was a way to lay the groundwork for improving the community.

This year, 22 non-profit agencies received slightly over \$100,000 in funds managed by the Gloucester Community Foundation, and on Nov. 10 at the Inn at Warner Hall, the foundation held a reception for all the organizations and leadership donors.

According to GCF chairman Theresa Stavens, it was much more than just a reception. The event, she said, served as a catalyst to start the discussion about community needs and resources, opening many people's eyes about the good work that is being done by a multitude of organizations.

"Something very special happened that night," Stavens said. More than just being there to say "thank you" for the grant, each group was given two minutes to tell the crowd about its particular mission, accomplishments and needs.

When each group's representative was speaking, Stavens said, you could have heard a pin drop. "Everybody was absolutely interested. Everybody wanted to hear," she said.

"It was really learning and really honoring the work that these people do for the community," she said. In the brief time since the reception, Stavens has heard of groups that have reached out to help one another, based on what they learned that night. "Already I'm feeling a synergy from it," she said. "Everyone walked away wanting to do more."

A big chunk of this year's contributions came from the Safety Net Fund, a one-time emergency fund set up by the Gloucester Community Foundation in response to current economic hardship. Over \$60,000 was awarded in two cycles over the spring and fall.

The first recipients were the Gloucester Housing Partnership, Middle Peninsula Business Development Partnership, Three Rivers Healthy Families, the Samaritan Group, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and the Gloucester-Mathews Free Clinic.

Second-round grants went to Habitat for Humanity, the Gloucester Boys and Girls Club, the Laurel Shelter, Bread for Life Community Food Pantry, and the Dental Clinic.

"It's been very timely," Candie Newman, director of the Middle Peninsula Business Development Partnership, said about the Safety Net grant her organization received.

The funding will allow the Business Development Partnership to offer six business training scholarships to Gloucester County residents who have lost their jobs and are looking to start their own businesses. The eight-week training begins Jan. 12, Newman said, and registrations are being accepted now.

According to Stavens, the Bread for Life representative called the Gloucester Community Foundation "a beacon of light that spreads to all of us and gives hope to so many." The Sanders Foundation provided \$12,500 to help start up Gloucester's Safety Net Fund, which was used to match a grant from the Community Foundation of Richmond.

The Sanders Foundation, which has its own separate board directing its donations, contributed nearly \$29,000 to eight groups who were also recognized at the reception: Gloucester-Mathews Free Clinic, Gloucester Housing Partnership, Hands Across Mathews, Salvation Army of Gloucester, the Gloucester Samaritans, Laurel Shelter, and the TRIAD groups in Gloucester and Mathews counties.

Several days before the reception, the board of the Sanders Foundation Fund met and elected Benjamin C. Garrett III, Robert Marble and Elizabeth P. McCormick to three-year terms. Officers for the coming year are president Daniel O. Worthington Jr., vice president Gaylord W. Ray, and secretary Anne A. Marshall.

Another named fund within the Gloucester Community Foundation, the Peace Frogs Bank to Bank Charitable Fund, awarded \$2,176 to the Rural Infant Services Program.

GCF, through its endowment funds, contributed another \$4,350 to the Fairfield Foundation, the Family Room, the Literacy Council, Gloucester Public Schools' Full Service Schools Program, the Cook Foundation Virginia Symphony and Art Camp, Bay Aging, and the Middle Peninsula Land Trust.

In spite of giving away all this money, or more likely because of this generosity, assets housed within the Gloucester Community Foundation have nearly doubled in the past year, with four new funds just established. GCF currently manages over \$2.4 million in donor-advised funds.

"It was amazing and heartwarming to hear about the many lives that were touched through the various organizations which have received funding from the community foundation," said Gloucester Main Street executive director Jenny Crittenden. "Gloucester is truly fortunate to have such a dedicated board of directors leading the foundation."