

Carolina delegates visit Howard for community development help

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Five delegates from Marion County South Carolina visited Miner County to learn about community development from Miner County Community Revitalization (MCCR).

The delegates from a recently formed group called the Marion County Collaborative Action Network (MCCAM) spent three days attending community meetings, getting to know residents and networking with MCCR staff. One of the events they attended was the MCCR Annual Meeting on April 27, 2003 attended by over 300 county residents.

“The community pride demonstrated at the Annual Meeting was something that we dream about,” Peter Mulford, CEO of Marion Regional Health Center said. “Our visit reaffirmed that we need a new commitment by a more diversified group in our county to help to focus our efforts.”

After an initial planning grant of \$25,000 in 2002, The Marion Regional Healthcare System received a grant from the Duke Endowment and formed MCCAM. The grant involves \$500,000 in grant assistance over a three-year term to institute the following four initiatives.

- Industry/Work Force Retention through improved productivity.
- Connect the unemployed with work available within a 50-mile radius.
- Develop new sectors and expand existing sectors of business and industry.
- Increase income and wealth of existing residents while attracting new residents to the county.

MCCAM delegates were encouraged to travel to Missouri County, Arkansas and Miner County, South Dakota as designated by the Duke Endowment as places where this kind of work was already taking place.

The Duke Endowment identified MCCR’s work through their website at www.mccr.net The Duke Endowment is one of the largest private foundations in the nation. Established in 1924 by North Carolina industri-

alist and philanthropist James Buchanan Duke, its mission is to serve the people of North Carolina and South Carolina by supporting selected programs of higher education, health care, children’s welfare and spiritual life.

The Duke Endowment and MDC, Inc. hosted a meeting in June of 2002 in North Carolina for some of their grant recipients. Seven grant recipient organizations were present at this first meeting where Randy Parry, MCCR Executive Director was one of the presenters.



Visitors to Miner County include (from left) Paul Crandall, director of Marion County Technical Education Center; Kent Williams, Marion County deputy administrator; Jodi Blume, Marion County department supervisor for Child and Adult Protection Services; Frank Hart, consultant and Peter Mulford, chief executive officer of Marion Regional Health Care System.

Parry and other community development experts were sought to speak at this conference to educate their grant recipients on how to engage their communities to focus on the future. Mulford said that after Parry’s presenta-

tion they were convinced to come and see Miner County first hand.

“We were so impressed particularly with the community cash flow (done in conjunction with the Annenburg Rural Challenge in 1995) and the eventual ability of MCCR to seek and receive funding from Northwest Area Foundation that we decided we had to visit,” Mulford said.

Besides attending the MCCR annual meeting, the Marion County delegates met with community volunteers, school officials, Tom Maurer from the Madison Area Career Learning Center, Dr. Jim Beddow from the Rural Learning Center (RLC) and viewed a PowerPoint presentation created by Howard High School students on county socio-economic data.

“The concept of the RLC involves engaging communities in discussion about the best ways to determine their own future,” Parry said. “Dr. Beddow has already identified communities starting this process and it is our hope that there are many other communities in the state and across the nation who can learn from our work.”

Marion County was able to compare issues and opportunities communities face in rural development like and unlike those of Miner County.

“Our visit reaffirmed what we heard Randy (Parry) speak about as to how to get all aspects of the community vested in its future,” Mulford said. “It reaffirmed the need to find key leaders within the county to pick up the administrative, technical and staffing support and we were tremendously impressed that better than 10 percent of the county has participated on one level or another.”

Marion County differs from Miner County in that the problems they face involve 16 percent unemployment made up largely of displaced workers from the textile and tobacco industry. Marion County has a population of 35,000.

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