

RCCI's 'Year of Changing' begins with leadership transition

May 31, 2017

It was part of the plan from the beginning.

The initiative that became known as Rapid City Collective Impact was created in the summer of 2015, and Albert Linderman, Ph.D., was brought in from the Twin Cities to serve as its director.

A timeline laid out the initiation of the collective impact process in Rapid City. The first year was designated as the “Year of Learning,” the second as the “Year of Connecting” and the third as the “Year of Changing,” a time of action and implementation, when the previous two years of work creating collaborations and designing strategic plans to improve quality of life in our community would start to come to fruition.

During his first several months as director, Linderman spent countless hours meeting with individuals, organizations, businesses and community groups throughout Rapid City to introduce the RCCI initiative and gather information from key stakeholders. He says the “Year of Learning” was highlighted in a three-day workshop conducted May 24-26, 2016, by two community-based system dynamics consultants, Don Greer and Megan Odenthal. The two continued as part of RCCI’s “backbone” team into the second year and facilitated many work stream conversations during that time that grew out of the workshop.

“Don, Megan and I have been deeply blessed to be part of the creation of social change in Rapid City,” Linderman said. “Over the past two years we have interacted with more than 2,500 people directly.”

Now the “Year of Changing” is upon us, and it includes a change in RCCI leadership.

“As was planned from the beginning, we knew that Year 3 would be a good time to transition RCCI to local backbone leadership,” Linderman said.

As of Aug. 1, 2017, RCCI will become a program of the Black Hills Area Community Foundation. Liz Hamburg is the executive director of the BHACF. She will continue in that role while building the infrastructure within the Foundation to lead the RCCI efforts.

Hamburg is already a member of RCCI's Guiding Council and now will have a seat on its Board of Directors as well. She will work closely with board member and Guiding Council member Sandy Diegel, President and CEO of the John T. Vucurevich Foundation, to develop a transition plan for RCCI for the Board's agreement.

The RCCI initiative was originated by area businessman and philanthropist Ray Hillenbrand, along with Diegel and businessmen Brent Phillips and Jim Scull. The group was later joined by Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender.

"In the foundation funding world, collective impact initiatives in the United States are typically led by a United Way chapter or by a community foundation, such as the Black Hill Area Community Foundation," Diegel said. "While Rapid City's initiative was started with the help of outside consultants, the intent was always for local leadership to carry out the implementation of the work. Albert and his team have done a great job of informing and engaging the community about collective impact and have the work in a good place to hand off the baton."

"We are all grateful for the work of Dr. Linderman, Megan, Don and the entire RCCI team," Hamburg said. "They will always be connected to this work in Rapid City, and we intend to engage them as we transition to local leadership for RCCI and we focus on the RCCI Board's priorities."

Last December the Board defined RCCI's priorities for 2017 as Affordable Housing/Homelessness, Behavioral Health and Food Security.

"The work addressing Food Security has already transitioned to local leadership and is now being led by Feeding South Dakota's Food Security Manager," Hamburg said. "We envision similar transitions for the Board's other work priorities."

As Linderman works this summer to help Hamburg transition into her new role, he also reflects on his two years at the helm of an organization working toward long-term community change.

"Personally, my heart and soul have been immersed here over these past two years," Linderman said. "I cherish the many friendships that I have formed, and I wish for great results in the ongoing work of RCCI."