

RCCI Initiative Update

August 2019

Collective Impact: *Bringing people together in a structured way to achieve social change. The five elements of Collective Impact are a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually-reinforcing activities, continuous communication and a strong backbone organization.*

Rapid City Collective Impact: *A community-supported initiative for solving complex social problems. We connect and collaborate with numerous individuals and organizations in an effort to improve the quality of life for Rapid City residents and, ultimately, build a more caring community. RCCI officially became a program of the Black Hills Area Community Foundation on Aug. 1, 2017.*

Food Security

Since January 2017, more than 20 agencies have come to the table to participate in RCCI's Food Security Oversight Committee. By being in the same place, at the same time, with the same understanding of what food insecurity looks like in Rapid City, committee members have found ways to work together and, in turn, further RCCI's mission as well as their own missions.

Mapping and data collection conducted in 2017 highlighted the fact that Rapid City has several low-income neighborhoods with limited access to food options. In response, Feeding South Dakota began expanding its mobile food distributions to include an additional Saturday each month in these areas deemed "priorities" by the FSOC, and even more mobile distributions are possible going forward thanks to the addition of a specialized trailer that joined the FSD fleet in early 2019.

Stepping inside the trailer is like walking into a mini-grocery store, complete with shelves, refrigerators and freezers. Food Security Manager Mary Corbine says these are known as "choice" pantries because clients can choose their own items, rather than simply being handed a bag or box of food.

The Black Hills Area Community Foundation awarded a \$50,000 grant to FSD to support staffing and other aspects of the new trailer and its distributions in order to better assist the people being served.



Food Security Grants

For a second year, the Black Hills Area Community Foundation awarded funds to local organizations to further the work of addressing food insecurity in Rapid City. Members of the FSOC reviewed the applications in the spring of 2019 and selected six projects to receive a total of \$16,500 in grant funds.

***Volunteers of America** received \$5,000 to expand its food pantry to serve both veterans and clients of Mommy’s Closet. The pantry is also located in one of the “priority areas” identified by the FSOC.

***Community Health Center of the Black Hills** received \$3,000 to provide fresh food coupons and support an emergency food pantry for the center’s diabetic patients. These are offered in tandem with dietitian services, education and clinical case management.

***Youth & Family Services** was awarded \$3,375 to feed adults accompanying youth to the Monroe Street summer meals site in 2019. YFS received grant funds for the same purpose in 2018 and reported serving 951 more meals to kids and nearly 900 more meals to adults compared to the previous summer.

***Rapid City Area Schools** received \$2,125 to feed adults accompanying youth to the RCAS food truck for lunch over the summer.

***YMCA** was awarded \$2,500 to support its new outreach site and partnership with Wellfully. The Y provided lunch and activities for kids in the Roosevelt Park neighborhood on weekdays this summer.

***Black Hills Farmers Market** was awarded \$500 to provide up to 250 \$2 tokens to kids so they could choose their own fresh fruits or vegetables at the market during the month of July.



Summer Food Programs

Partnerships continue between Meals on Wheels Western South Dakota and agencies that provide free summer meals to kids, including Rapid City Area Schools, Youth & Family Services and the YMCA. While the schools and agencies have fed hungry kids at their sites for several summers, Meals on Wheels can – and now does – cover the expense of feeding accompanying adults, 60 and older.

This also marked the third year that RCCI has worked with the organizations involved in the summer food program to create a map with details about where and when meals are served. Approximately 9,000 flyers were distributed at RCAS schools and at agencies around the community in 2019.

Affordable Housing

In support of RCCI's affordable housing initiative, the John T. Vucurevich Foundation commissioned the Black Hills Knowledge Network to conduct a housing study in the fall of 2017 to determine the number and types of housing units that currently exist in the city and what is needed to meet the community's demands now and in the coming years.

Among the key findings revealed in the 76-page report, titled "Affordable Housing Profile and Market Gap Analysis – Rapid City Area," is that the Rapid City area is short nearly 3,500 housing units costing less than \$900 per month in the owner-occupied market. A similar trend exists in the rental market, where a minimum of 1,459 units are needed with gross rents of no more than \$500 per month.



The study also found that more than half of households earning less than \$20,000 per year in 2016 spent more than 50 percent of their income on housing.

While the report provided stakeholders with a shared understanding of the local housing market, two housing summits hosted by RCCI in 2017 and 2018 provided a starting point for strategic planning. Black Hills Area Community Foundation Executive Director Liz Hamburg said one of the main outcomes was the need for a "point person" in the housing arena. As a result, local attorney and former state lawmaker David Lust was hired as a consultant in the fall of 2018 to steer the work.

Bush Foundation Grant

The spring of 2019 brought with it some exciting developments in the affordable housing realm. The Bush Foundation, based in Minnesota, awarded a \$200,000 grant to support RCCI's work addressing the lack of affordable housing in Rapid City.

In its application, RCCI listed several goals for the term of the two-year Community Innovation Grant, including plans to create a nonprofit development corporation or partner with an existing organization to build and manage affordable housing properties.

Other goals include plans to establish public/private partnerships with developers to leverage available resources and expertise, and map existing affordable housing stock to determine what could be done – acquisition, renovation, replacement or new construction – for residents whose average median household income is less than \$35,000 per year.

One of the long-term goals noted in the application is that, through resident-focused property management and community connections, Rapid City will see a reduction in the hopelessness of many of its working poor by allowing more people the ability to have a place to call "home."

CommonBond Communities

CommonBond Communities, a nonprofit developer and manager of affordable housing with onsite services, announced in May that it will expand its service area to provide affordable housing with services to the Rapid City community this year.

In late 2018, CommonBond initiated a feasibility study around housing needs and worked to determine the most likely path for a nonprofit affordable housing provider to enter the market. Through an extensive review of available data, and dozens of interviews with local leaders, it became clear the necessary resources and community leadership were available.



“We are pleased to expand our work to the Rapid City community,” said Deidre Schmidt, President and CEO of CommonBond Communities, which is based in the Twin Cities. “During our conversations with leaders in Rapid City, it became abundantly clear that this community can positively impact pressing housing needs through collaboration.”

CommonBond staff, with advice from Rapid City leaders, will begin real estate acquisition and development activities in this calendar year. This work is anticipated to complement existing efforts of the Rapid City Collective Impact initiative’s work on housing and homelessness issues.

"In addition to increasing the amount of affordable housing available in Rapid City, we are pleased that CommonBond brings with it an array of support services that assists tenants in maintaining successful housing," said Alan Solano, CEO of the John T. Vucurevich Foundation.

This expansion was made possible by the generous support of the Black Hills Area Community Foundation and the John T. Vucurevich Foundation.

New Hire

A familiar face in the local Human Services sector is bringing her 20-plus years of experience to RCCI.

Tracy Palecek was hired in the summer of 2019 to serve as RCCI’s Affordable Housing Storyteller and Facilitator, assisting community partners in bringing affordable housing to our area.

Tracy has a passion for helping people reach their goals and has done so as an advocate, program coordinator, community organizer, mental health therapist, and mentor.

OneHeart: A Place for Hope & Healing

OneHeart is the future transformation campus that will serve people motivated to move out of poverty and into a better quality of life. The campus will include transitional housing for program clients and a center where multiple human services agencies can offer a variety of support services in one place.

As of July 2019, OneHeart is no longer under the umbrella of Rapid City Collective Impact or the Black Hills Area Community Foundation. For information on the campus, visit www.oneheartrc.org.

Emerging Leaders

Rapid City Collective Impact and the John T. Vucurevich Foundation celebrated the second cadre of RCCI Emerging Leaders during a banquet at Arrowhead Country Club in January 2019.

Twenty-nine individuals from a cross-section of the community participated in the fellowship program, committing to a year of learning about and practicing collective impact strategies and supporting RCCI projects. Jessica Gromer of the John T. Vucurevich Foundation serves as program facilitator.



Cadre 2 Learning Labs

During the cadre's opening retreat in January 2018, members divided into four learning labs to address specific issues in Rapid City: homelessness, education/life skills, livability, and business connections. Each learning lab provided a final report on their work during the celebratory banquet.

The **Business Learning Lab** set out to prepare a solid foundation with local businesses, specifically in regard to the future OneHeart transformation campus. Members manned a booth at the 2018 Chamber of Commerce Business-to-Business Expo. They also visited more than 250 businesses in the core of downtown Rapid City to inform them about the plans being developed for the campus and to hear questions about those plans. They encouraged business owners and/or managers to take an online questionnaire about OneHeart. Few people took the opportunity to do so; however, those who did generally responded positively to the transformation campus concept.

The **Livability Learning Lab's** main project stemmed from information garnered by the *first* Emerging Leaders cadre, which interviewed hundreds of Rapid City residents as part of a livability survey. Group leader Michelle Schuelke said there were two big takeaways from that survey: people love Rapid City, especially the downtown area; and residents have concerns about the lack of things to do for middle school-aged youth. In response, the second cadre's Livability lab partnered with the Rapid City Police Activities League (PAL) to organize "Night Court," 3-on-3 youth basketball games during Summer Nights events on Thursdays in downtown Rapid City. After Night Court was added to the scene, only one altercation involving youth was recorded during Summer Nights, and that incident was outside the downtown area. The group also reported 209 participants and more positive police/youth interactions.

The **Homelessness Learning Lab** focused much of its attention on the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count, which is conducted each January. The count is mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to try to determine the number of homeless people in cities and towns across the country. Among their efforts, the homelessness group drafted a manual and other communications tools to make the local count as effective and efficient as possible. Group members reiterated the need for people to have a better understanding of what the PIT Count is and why it is so important.

The **Education/Life Skills Learning Lab** began with the goal of learning more about OneHeart in order to identify the appropriate services and classes that should be accessible for campus guests. They categorized and sorted existing services in Rapid City and then looked for gaps in what is available.

“The second cadre of RCCI Emerging Leaders was a huge success. Not only did this diverse group of fellows contribute to RCCI projects, they made professional and personal connections with one another while learning about our community in ways that would most likely not have happened without the fellowship opportunity.”

*Jessica Gromer
Emerging Leaders Facilitator*

Those gaps included responsible renting courses (which have since begun at Consumer Credit Counseling of the Black Hills,) a program plan for OneHeart guests for the year after they leave the campus, employment mentorship opportunities, and legal and civics classes and/or services.

In addition to working within their learning labs, the Emerging Leaders convened for quarterly meetings throughout 2018 to provide progress reports on their efforts and to learn more about the community in which they live. They delved deeper into topics such as Lakota culture, life in the crisis of poverty, and Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Several Emerging Leaders shared personal reflections during the final banquet. Many commented on how much they learned during the program; others remarked about the new relationships they formed; and some said the work truly stretched their personal boundaries.

Cadre 3

The third cadre of Emerging Leaders fellows began the year-long commitment to the program in 2019 with a retreat April 8-9. This group has divided into five working labs which will serve to further the development of the OneHeart transformation campus in the following areas: Awareness, Employer Partnerships, Social Enterprise, Health & Growth, and Urban Gardening.

“We have another great group of RCCI Emerging Leaders who represent a variety of sectors in our community,” Gromer said. “I am very excited to watch the cadre learn about Rapid City Collective Impact, connect with leaders who they would not normally meet in their work, and create projects that will support the OneHeart campus.”

RCCI extends its thanks to the John T. Vucurevich Foundation for its continued support of the Emerging Leaders Fellowship Program and Jessica Gromer for serving as facilitator.

Ray Hillenbrand

Rapid City Collective Impact lost a dear friend and its number one supporter when Ray Hillenbrand passed away on May 31, 2019, at the age of 84.

Ray was a successful businessman and generous philanthropist who wanted Rapid City to be “the most caring community of its size in the nation.”

The RCCI team and supporters of the RCCI initiative continue to strive to make Ray’s dream a reality.

