Funding solutions touted

By SUSAN LYNN
Register Editor

Almost 30 area residents learned about funding opportunities from representatives of two Kansas City foundations at a working lunch on Monday.

Administrators with Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the REACH Healthcare Foundation came to Iola specifically to tell those who work for area schools, cities and non-profit organizations of their funding mechanisms.

The foundations were formed from the sale of Health Midwest to the Hospital Corporation of America, which now leases Allen County Hospital.

"Give me an opportunity to say no," to a funding request, said Andres Dominquez, a program officer of the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City.

Monday's program was sponsored by Thrive Allen County, a local organization that received its initial funding from REACH.

Sharpe was instrumental in pairing researchers from the University of Kansas with local citizens to conduct a community needs assessment that gives critical demographic information. From this effort almost four years ago, Thrive Allen County was born.

"It has exceeded our expectations that Thrive is sustainable," Sharpe said of the local charitable foundation that has recently hired David Toland as its executive director.

Eight REACH Foundation employees attended Monday's meeting, evidence that "Our board cares a lot about Allen County," Sharpe said.

REACH funds primarily programs that concern oral health, mental health and safety net services that increase access to health care. Its vision is to meet the healthcare needs of the poor and underserved, especially for children whose families

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lack health insurance and are otherwise missed by state- and federal-based programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. REACH serves those whose income extends up to 300 percent beyond the federal poverty line.

Though Thrive got its start through REACH funding, it has since applied to other foundations for funds.

“That’s the goal,” Sharpe said. “We gave Thrive the leverage to seek other funding.”

Sharpe warned applicants not to “chase the dollars. You have to stay true to your organization’s mission and not to that of a foundation.”

Dominquez, of the Health Care Foundation, agreed.

“It’s not about money, but about working together to help people,” he said. “Your goal is to work toward what
is in the best interest to help your people thrive."

THE HEALTH CARE Foundation of Greater Kansas City distributes $25 million annually in grants; REACH averages $6 million to $7 million a year.

“We’re privileged to be stewards of these assets,” Dominquez said.

HCF gears its funding toward mental health, safety net and healthy lifestyles programs.

An example of its funding is the $2 million it gave last May to provide the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to females ages 9 to 26 in Kansas and Missouri to prevent cervical cancer. REACH and the Missouri Foundation for Health partnered with HCF to make it a $13.5 million effort to offer the vaccine at no cost. The Southeast Kansas Multi-County Health Department in Iola benefits from this effort.

HCF also has invested money in programs that work to establish and maintain healthy and active lifestyles and programs that combat obesity and smoking prevention.

In its mental health category, it plans to fund programs that address post traumatic stress disorder affecting returning soldiers.

Local organizations that have benefited from the two, besides Thrive Allen County and the county health department, are SAFE BASE and USD 257, Hope Unlimited, The Farm, Tri-Valley Developmental Services and Southeast Kansas Mental Health Center.

Sharpe encouraged organizations to apply for funding even if they have been denied in the past. “I’ll never say don’t ever come back,” she said. “Our job is to invest in community change.”

Dominquez encouraged participants to come to an HCF board meeting to see how members consider grant proposals.

THE EXECUTIVES field-
ed questions from the audience for a short time, but it was after the formal meeting that more one-on-one discussions occurred between participants.

Gila LaRue of the Neosho Valley American Red Cross chapter asked if funding was available to teach either basic first aid, babysitting training or child cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid classes.

Those requests would fit under HCF’s funding guidelines, Dominquez ventured.

Craig Neuenswander, superintendent of schools for USD 257, explained current facilities issues facing the district and asked if either foundation had models of a combination wellness center and medical site within a school setting.

Dominquez suggested Neuenswander visit Gladstone, Mo., to see its combined-uses facility.

Patty Mansor of the REACH Foundation said the PE4Life nonprofit program would be a good resource for Neuenswander and also for Ken McWhirter, principal at Marmaton Valley Junior High School, who is investigating a revamped physical education program.

Larry Tucker, city administrator of Humboldt, and Nancy Maier, Iola caseworker for the Southeast Kansas Area Agency on Aging, both had concerns about programs that could benefit the elderly.

The elderly receive Medicare, they acknowledged, but both feared governmental programs would lapse in the coverage needed to maintain safe and healthy lives for seniors.

Joan Newman, a social worker with Social and Rehabilitative Services in Chanute, wondered if any of the foundations could pay for a social worker to be in the public schools to help troubled teens. She cited Labette County schools and their success with such a
partnership.
Sharpe responded that REACH has a "bias against supplanting government's responsibility" to its citizens.
She did cite, however, a case in which a private school in Kansas City was receiving funds to place a mental health therapist with its students.

Dommquez asked participants to consider their own resources among themselves. For families that have no descendants remaining in Allen County, their estates upon their deaths most likely will be leaving the area. It's not out of the question to ask those families to leave their estates to some local entity, Domínguez said.

TO HELP PEOPLE new at the grant-writing process, REACH is having two "Letters of Intent" writing workshops at its Kansas City office. The first, on Friday, has a few slots left. It is from 9:30 am. to 11:30 a.m. The other workshop is March 7.

For more information call the REACH Healthcare Foundation toll-free at (866) 866-8805.
Other participants at the meeting were Angela Henry and Wanda Kneen of SAFE BASE; Kristy Boaz of the Area Agency on Aging; Jacki Chase, USD 257 school nurse; Bethany Martin, Pregnancy Resource Center SEK; Dorothy Sparks and Donita Garner, Hope Unlimited; Krista Postai and Jason Wesco of Pittsburg's Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas; Karen Gilpin, Susan Raines, Brian Wolfe and Toland of Thrive Allen County; Jan Correll and Patrick Nickelson of Chanute's SRS office; Kim Herfurth, Marian Highbarger and Linda Harrison of Windsor Place; Bob Chase, Doug Wright and Nathan Fawson of Southeast Kansas Mental Health; and Judy Brigham, City of Iola.

To visit the foundations' Web sites go to www.healthcare4ks.org and www.reachhealth.org.
Astronaut to return to KU to teach physics

By Tim Carpenter
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

NASA astronaut and program manager Steve Hawley accepted a new mission Wednesday that involves shaping young minds in Kansas rather than testing boundaries in outer space.

Hawley, a Salina native who flew on five space shuttle flights from 1984 to 1999, will join the faculty at The University of Kansas. Aside from teaching introductory physics this fall, he will work on projects to inspire younger students to chase careers in mathematics and science.

“Working with students at KU and across Kansas is a wonderful opportunity to share what I have seen and encourage them to set high goals and go out and discover what this world has to offer,” he said.

Hawley, 56, said he would retire in May from his position at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration as director of astromaterials research and exploration science. He oversees NASA’s planetary and space science research and handles the agency’s collection of moon rocks, comet dust, meteorites and solar wind particles.

Hawley graduated from KU with a physics and astronomy degree in 1973 and was selected in 1978 to join the astronaut program.

On Wednesday, the KU staff brought him to a series of events in Salina, Hutchinson, Topeka and Lawrence in conjunction with announcement of his appointment.

KU chancellor Bob Hemenway accompanied Hawley during a brief appearance in the Kansas Senate.

Hemenway said the number of teacher licenses in chemistry, biology and physics had plummeted in recent years. Schools recruit overseas to fill teaching vacancies in science and math jobs.

“Science education is vital to the future of this state and nation,” he said. “We need people like Steve to build a new excitement and urgency about science and math education.”

Tim Carpenter can be reached at (785) 296-3005 or timothy.carpenter@cjonline.com