

4 Seneca County towns seek health-care grant

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OVID — Four towns in southern Seneca County are in the running to receive a \$75,000 grant for projects to improve the health of some 10,000 residents.

The towns claim they are underserved by health-care facilities and services and worked with the S2AY Rural Health Network to prepare and submit a proposal to the Greater Rochester Health Foundation.

Other community partners and revenue sources will help provide the rest of the money for the first year of the project, which carries a price tag of \$127,810.

A local committee that has been working on the project hosted Greater Rochester Health Foundation officials Friday at the Edith B. Ford Library to further explain the importance of the grant and make their case.

"We received 11 applications in response to our request for proposals," said Barbara Zappia, senior program officer for the Foundation.

"Five were selected for site visits. This is the third of those five site visits," Zappia said, adding that the Foundation plans to provide funding for two applications, one urban and one rural. "We're looking for a resident-driven, asset-based, grassroots project that relies on partnerships to produce changes in health."

John Urban, CEO of the Foundation, said the grants will not go strictly for health care services, such as medical clinics, but for a host of other activities that will improve people's physical, economic, mental and social health.

Zappia cited a Dundee health care project that was funded by the Foundation as an example.

Ave Bauder of Willard, a member of the committee working on the project, said south Seneca County has been hit hard by the closure of Willard Psychiatric Center and the Seneca Army Depot, both major employers.

"We are at a tipping point. We are facing adversity, which can either create opportunities we can seize or we can allow ourselves to be overcome by it," Bauder said. "We chose to seize the opportunity. We believe we are a uniquely rural area, a rural neighborhood that is different than a city neighborhood, but a neighborhood in several senses of that definition."

He cited income disparity, with wealthy people living along the two lakes and others living in poverty. He said health care facilities are limited, but the people are resilient and used to working together to get things done.

Winifred Jones spoke of the important role that public libraries in Ovid, Lodi and Interlaken play in

providing services to the rural area in terms of literacy and information.

David Dresser, a member of the South Seneca school board, spoke about the important role that public schools play in the community as the hub of many activities. He also cited a four-town community center that doesn't have a central location but operates programs in the school facilities.

Ovid resident Phyllis Motill, president of the Seneca County United Way, said communications and transportation are key issues in terms of emotional, environmental and physical health of residents in south Seneca County.

Urban and Zappia asked the group questions about their proposal.

"We want to be sure that your project involves listening to the people and encouraging them to take action, not waiting for you to dictate to them what they need," Urban said.

The grant project is called the Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions, or STEPS. The application seeks funding for several priorities, including:

- Training for volunteer coaches
- Diabetic screenings
- Promotion of dial-a-ride programs
- Ambulance and emergency responders equipment and training
- An after-school project
- Cemetery upkeep with volunteers
- Nutrition, physical fitness and other health-related classes
- Diabetes, weight and blood pressure clinics
- A nature trail behind the Interlaken school
- Walking path promotion
- Organizing volunteers to transport people to appointments, help with groceries and other needs.
- Community gardens
- Sidewalk improvements and house numbering
- Water system improvements and property improvement programs.

By the numbers

The total population of Romulus, Ovid, Lodi and Covert is 10,331.

Per capita income ranges from a low of \$13,548 in Romulus to a high of \$28,750 in Covert, with

Ovid at \$17,472 and Lodi at \$20,644.

The state per capita income is \$31,796, with the national per capita income at \$27,915.