

Mayor Tyrel Clark, and EDA Director Cathy Enerson recently participated on the Leadership team for the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's One Big Thing Grant Awards

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) recently approved funding for three projects through its \$100,000 One Big Thing Grant and Regional Community Growth Initiative (CGI).

Thirty communities surrounding the Rochester area have collaborated through SMIF's 2014 One Big Thing Grant to participate in the Regional CGI. The CGI was developed to bring together community leaders in southeastern Minnesota to position themselves for future growth in response to the City of Rochester's implementation of Destination Medical Center and Journey to Growth led by Rochester Area Economic Development Inc. The CGI encouraged leadership in the bordering communities to analyze assets and design a strategy for collaboration. Through this \$100,000, these communities will be well positioned to implement their collaborative projects leading to future growth and prosperity. The counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona all have community representatives participating in the CGI process.

The projects chosen for funding include:

- A Regional Marketing Campaign to review existing avenues for regional marketing, facilitate a series of discussions with regional stakeholders about better leveraging existing avenues to market local opportunities on a boarder level and/or to create new avenues, and assist stakeholders to develop next steps. This project is led by Chris Giesen and was approved for \$20,000 of grant funding.
- SE MN Together project to empower smaller communities in SE Minnesota to take the leadership for their own community, enter into partnerships/collaborations within the region, and leverage the impacts of the DMC and J2G as an opportunity. This project is led by Natalie Siderius and Sheila Kiscaden and will receive \$80,000 of grant funding.
- Connect Trails Project to form a larger regional trail system, develop a master plan and seek further funding, promote healthy living and active lifestyle for all ages, provide recreational activities as a destination, and increasing tourism into communities connected to trail. This project is led by Chris and Ann Priebe and was approved for a \$20,000 challenge grant.

"We are pleased to support these asset-based approaches to support these communities surrounding," says Tim Penny, President/CEO. "We're excited to see them use the opportunity of DMC to strengthen and grow regional collaborations."

For more information on these projects, contact Pam Bishop at [507-455-3215](tel:507-455-3215) or pamb@smifoundation.org.