

By Russ Pankonin

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As a native son of Grant and Perkins County, I understand the pride people feel in everything they do and accomplish. It's that kind of spirit that has helped move the Perkins County “community” forward.

Whether it's a state championship, the landing of a new business, the recruitment of a new doctor or the success of a “county” Chamber project, there's a sense of pride and conviction in the people of Perkins County that's unmatched in many Nebraska counties twice our size.

That's why I'm sure the people in Perkins County will meet their next challenge!

In 2006, the Perkins County Community Foundation set a Dec. 31, 2009 goal to create a \$200,000 unrestricted endowment for the benefit of Perkins County.

The Hunt family, founders of Great Plains Telephone Company, offered to contribute \$50,000 to the foundation if Perkins County could match their donation with \$150,000 over a three-year period.

In an endowment, the principal funds stay intact forever, with investment proceeds used to fund worthwhile projects on an on-going basis.

To get the first \$25,000 of the challenge match, the Perkins County Community Foundation had to raise \$75,000 in the first year. Needless to say, the people of Perkins County met that challenge.

Now, they just have to finish raising the second \$75,000 by Dec. 31 to get the other \$25,000 in matching challenge funds.

So far, Perkins County residents have raised \$30,000 towards the final goal, including more than \$20,000 in the last month alone. But, there's still a ways to go to meet the \$75,000 goal.

The sense of urgency is now! Time is short.

Think of meeting the final goal in these terms: every dollar contributed towards the goal from here on creates a return of 55% when the goal is met and the final \$25,000 challenge grant is deposited into the foundation account.

Frankly, you can't beat a return like that and what better investment to make than claiming a stake in the future of your community and county.

There are lots of ways to make a contribution before year-end. It could be in the form of stocks, grain, livestock, IRA distributions and just good ol' cash. And, since the Perkins County Community Foundation is a recognized 501c3 charity, your contributions are tax deductible.

Three years ago, Wausau's community foundation received a substantial boost through a tax-free gift from a donor's IRA account. The donor's IRA had grown significantly and he was looking for a way to unlock his IRA without paying mega taxes.

Experts estimate heirs may receive only 25-30 percent of IRA assets that pass through estates, so the tax-free rollover opportunity is a tax-efficient way to handle an IRA while benefitting the community.

Until Dec. 31, 2009, federal law allows people 70 1/2 or older to make a tax-free gift from their IRAs. Plus, the contribution, of up to \$100,000, qualifies as the minimum annual IRA distribution, not to mention boosting the foundation's efforts.

Such a gift must be made directly from the custodian of one's IRA to the foundation. The Perkins County foundation is affiliated with the Nebraska Community Foundation, which makes professional consultants available for consultation on this and other charitable gifts.

Fill out the form inserted in this week’s paper and make your contribution. You can also contact any of the foundation board members if you have questions. Board members include Michelle Ross, Patti Lee, Jane Culver, Val Foster, Jeff Wallin, Brian Hightower, Kami Krajewski, Janet Lagler, Becky Uehling and Ashley Colglazier.

Let’s show that Perkins County spirit by meeting yet again another important challenge for the future of our “community.”