

INTRODUCING THE EVERGREEN LEGACY FOUNDATION

When there is a need in our unincorporated community, Evergreen Legacy Foundation (ELF) is often there to fill the void. In 2010, volunteers stepped forward to address the lack of attention paid to infrastructure by attempting first to spiff-up Main Street. Frustrated but energized by possibility, that committee of downtown businesspeople has since expanded its reach to all of Evergreen, primarily making safety improvements.

With a series of name changes to reflect its increasing influence, the committee was known as the Evergreen Legacy Fund until April. They are now the Evergreen Legacy Foundation. Last year, the group's focus was sidewalks and crosswalks at Wilmot Elementary School, the first phase of a three-phase project that will eventually enable pedestrians and bikers to have a safer trip between Hatch Drive and the Evergreen Library on Highway 73. This year, ELF looks forward to the widening of Highway 73, with three lanes of traffic plus paved and striped shoulders. Along the way, ELF has responded to requests from other organizations to help with projects designed to enhance the beauty of Evergreen or upgrade its amenities. New planters along Main Street are one example that will be implemented this summer.

The creation of a community foundation was a void waiting to be filled, and ELF stepped up to the plate. "There had been some talk about this," says Linda Kirkpatrick, executive director. "But when a major donor posed the question to us, 'What would you do with a million dollars?' we began thinking more seriously about what could happen if residents considered ELF in their estate planning and we could distribute money to sustain the community as we know it." Currently, the organization is primarily funded by a voluntary 1% donation added to the bottom line of receipts by businesses that have chosen to support the effort. "It's a pass-thru," notes Kirkpatrick.

ELF applies for grants payable only to a municipality (Jefferson County), allowing 80 cents of every dollar to be recycled multiple times to fund future projects. When donations began to exceed the \$90,000 pledged to the county on an annual basis to fund 17 projects of the Evergreen Local Improvement District (ELID), ELF began making small grants. "We tend to make challenge grants to jump-start fundraising for other organizations with their own volunteers who make things happen," Kirkpatrick explains.



(L-R): ELF Executive Director Linda Kirkpatrick and Evergreen Downtown Business Association members Tara Ryan, Megan Mitchell and Eric Gill with a check representing payment for 26 self-watering EarthPlanter® pots to line Main Street

When Bergen Meadow Elementary School closed its doors in May 2024, ELF took the lead in coordinating the four special districts and six nonprofit organizations that met to fabricate a proposal to the board of education and Jefferson County, one that would not change the landscape much but would meet multi-generational needs. Inviting Foothills Regional Housing to the table, together they crafted a plan that would add much-needed senior housing as well as retain the two athletic fields and reserve a building pad for a community center sometime in the future. To learn more about this evolving organization, visit www.evergreenlegacyfdn.org. ♦

Jefferson County has an aging population

The average age in Evergreen is 50 and not getting younger. Many couples moved here to raise their families in the 1970s and 80s, watched their children graduate and move away, and experienced the death of one spouse. Too often the surviving spouse lives alone in a large home because they cannot afford to downsize — and there are few housing options suitable for seniors in Evergreen, and even fewer *affordable* ones.

When you hear about proposed affordable housing, think about these seniors who'd rather not leave the place where they've spent the best years of their lives. The Evergreen Legacy Foundation and other interested parties are proposing affordable senior apartments as part of the future for the 13-acre Bergen Meadow campus. Keeping the fields and playgrounds and reserving space for a future community center will make it a multi-generational activity center.

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