

Monticello Herald Journal

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: Meeting helps gather data about life in White County

Apr 19, 2022



Leslie  
**GOSS**

GUEST COLUMNIST

Your Community Foundation of White County recently filled five days and nights listening to individuals and groups from around our county share their impressions, thoughts and dreams — the good, the bad, and the ugly stuff maybe being swept under the rug — for this place we call home.

It was a busy week, but oh, so inspiring and exciting!

Facilitating these sessions were Frank and Kim Spillers, of Rural CommUnity Solutions based in Iowa. In addition to our scheduled sessions, Frank and Kim were able to squeeze in a few conversations with folks at local coffee shops and restaurants, gathering even more perceptions from those of us who live, work and play here.

We are grateful to all the participants who graciously shared their time with us as well as to the facilities that opened their doors for us, and the caterers who kept all of us fed.

The goal of these gatherings was to gain personal perceptions of life in White County from a wide range of citizens from diverse backgrounds, interests, professions and demographics to hear about how people view our community's quality of life, its potential and commitment to its future.

Are we a welcoming community? Do we extend a hand to include visitors or newcomers in our activities? Do we welcome folks who "aren't like us?"

Do we value our youth? Do we engage them in decision-making? Do we allow, encourage and support their creative thinking and entrepreneurial spirits or expect them to simply follow the expected, traditional path?

Are we open to change (whatever that may be for you)?

Do we want our communities to grow?

Do we have defined goals or plans for our community or are we just riding along hoping everything works out?

Do we work collaboratively or in silos?

Do we have open lines of communication? Do we encourage and promote participation in community visioning?

As Frank and Kim noted — and is true for every generation — decisions made 25 years ago laid the foundation for how our communities look and act today. Decisions we make today are creating the future for the next generation. What do we want that present, as well as that future, to be?

Data collected in these gatherings will be added to a deep-dive set of technical demographics already compiled for us by e2 (Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, based in Kansas), a firm that partners with Rural CommUnity Solutions in these community leadership initiatives.

Over the next couple of months, RCS is compiling, synthesizing and analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative data and will present a final report to our foundation. This report will be available to each of our cities and towns, county government, schools, nonprofits, and any individual or organization interested.

White County is a great place and has even greater potential! Your Community Foundation chose to invest in this initiative to help our entire community vision and create some strategic priorities that will contribute to community efficiency, collaboration, prosperity, and vitality.

Thank you for partnering with us to help White County be the very best it can be!

For more information about your Community Foundation of White County, contact me or visit [www.cfwhitecounty.org](http://www.cfwhitecounty.org).

Leslie Goss is executive director of the Community Foundation of White County, Ind.

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