

## COUNTY COOPERATIVE PROJECT

PRESENTED BY:

Retha Hicks, Winona Lake Clerk-Treasurer

*"I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have to hold for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations." George Bernard Shaw*

We chose the County Cooperative Project to develop teamwork between community clerk-treasurers.

Retha is actively involved in the Indiana League of Municipal Clerk-Treasurers, serving on several committees. She has been the clerk of Winona Lake for eight years. Pat Outlaw from R.R. Donnelly and Scott Helt, Kosciusko Community Hospital were the other committee members.

"County Cooperative" was in my heart because of my personal interest and knowledge of the workings of community government. The KLA team assisted in selling the idea to the area clerks. We sent a letter of invitation outlining the goals of the meeting: to streamline responsibilities, assist each other, discuss current local issues, future projects, new legislation, un-funded mandates, cooperative endeavors to save on expenses and to share the solutions for some of these.

If clerk-treasurers were to collaborate and combine their community resources and address issues, this process should save money. In turn it would favorably impact you, the **TAXPAYER!** An example of that would be a situation from our first meeting in February. One of the clerks attending shared a concern of her community. After there was some discussion, a need was determined and met within minutes with the possibility of a \$900 a month savings for her small community. This problem solving alone was worth the effort of the meetings.

In conclusion, our project was to develop teamwork between communities. We are excited that this project will make our community governments more efficient to serve you. Our town government is only as good as the residents' participation. Our challenge to you is to become involved with town and city boards as members. Be a part of the growth of Kosciusko County.

# 2001 All-America City Award Application

We encourage applications from neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties and regions

## Community Information

### Community name and state:

Kosciusko County, Indiana

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### Your Community is applying as:

Neighborhood  Town  City  County  Region

### If applying as a Region, name participating communities:

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### If applying as a neighborhood, name city:

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## Contact Information

### All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout competition and for follow-up):

Name: Stephanie Noffsinger

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Title: Program Officer, Coordinator

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Organization: Kosciusko County Foundation, LifeQuest

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Address: 102 East Market Street

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City, State, ZIP: Warsaw, IN 46580

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Phone (business/day): (219) 267-1901

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Fax (business/day): (219) 268-9780

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Phone (home/evening): (219) 267-4764

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Fax (home/evening): N/A

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E-mail Address: stephanie@kcfoundation.org

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### List the 3 individuals who most actively participated in filling out this All-America City Award application (add additional lines if needed):

[Provide Name and title; Organization; Phone; E-mail address]

Christanne Howe, Attorney, Hampton & Voelz, (219) 268-4253, hamptonvoelz@compuserve.com

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Stephanie Noffsinger, See Above

Angela Ritchey, Vice President, Lake City Bank, (219) 267-6144, angie.ritchey@lakecitybank.com

If we are designated an All-America City, we agree to follow NCL's rules regarding use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Community Statistics**

Note: Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (source suggestions: U.S. Census Bureau, State Department of Economic Security, State Department of Finance, Department of Public Health, and local school statistics)

**FORM OF GOVERNMENT, if applicable:**

Council-Manager  
 Mayor-Council

**POPULATION (in year 2000 or most recent):** 74,057

Source: Fed Stats - Website - U.S. Census Bureau; Warsaw School Corp. data from 2001

Source Date & Year: 2000 Census figures

**POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1990-2000 (indicate + or -):** + 9.3 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Source Date & Year: 1999 estimates

**RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN (percentage):**

Census Data		Tri-County School Corp. Data*	
White (non-Hispanic)	92.9%	White (non-Hispanic)	_____ %
Black	.6%	Black	_____ %
Hispanic (of any origin)	5.0%	Hispanic (of any origin)	8.07%
Asian	.6%	Asian	_____ %
Native American	.2%	Native American	_____ %
Other	.7%	Other	_____ %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Source Date & Year: 2000 Census figures

\*Data gathered is average of two of the county's school corporations (Warsaw & Wawasec) and reflects percentage of students learning English as a second language.

**MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME:** \$ 39,977

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Source Date & Year: 1999 estimates

**PERCENTAGE of FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL:** 6 %

Source: Website: stats.indiana.edu (as provided by Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce)

Source Date & Year: 1997

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UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: 1.8 %

Source: Website: stats.indiana.edu (as provided by Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce)

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Source Date & Year: September 2000

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**POPULATION BREAKDOWN by AGE GROUP** (percentages, if available):

Below 18 years	30.6%
18-24	5.9%
25-44	29.5%
45-64	21.8%
Over 65	12.2%

Source: Website: stats.indiana.edu (as provided by Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce)

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Source Date & Year: 1999

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PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP: 79.0 % (more recent housing census data not available).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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Source Date & Year: 1990 Census

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**WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:**

<u>Manufacturing</u>	<u>37.3</u> %
<u>Services</u>	<u>22.4</u> %
<u>Retail Trade</u>	<u>17.2</u> %

Source: Website: stats.indiana.edu

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Source Date & Year: 1998

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## Part I: Community Background and Community Challenge Section

Add lines as needed for your responses

**1 (A). Community Background:** Set the background for your community. Tell its story. Summarize your community's history, successes and struggles. Describe how your community got to where it is today and your community's current state of affairs. (700 word maximum):

The Honorable John B. Chapman named this county after Thaddeus Kosciuzko, a Revolutionary War Hero of Polish descent.

Kosciusko County lies in the northeast part of Indiana, 23 miles south of the Michigan State line and 45 miles west from the Ohio State line.

The county is watered by Tippecanoe River, and numerous lakes, which it drains, and by Turkey Creek. The former rises in the northeast, and flows in a southwestern direction to the Wabash River. Principal lakes included: Lake Wawasee, Tippecanoe Lake, Eagle Lake, Little Eagle Lake, Pike Lake, Center Lake, Hoffman Lake, Beaver Dam Lake and Silver Lake, in addition there are many other smaller lakes.

The county was organized in April 1836. The original county seat was Leeburg, but several months later, Warsaw was named the county seat.

Cities and towns within Kosciusko County include Atwood, Burket, Claypool, Etna Green, Leesburg, Mentone, Milford, North Webster, Pierceton, Sidney, Silver Lake, Syracuse, Warsaw, and Winona Lake.

The county has a rich farm background, in both agriculture and poultry. The organization of the poultry industry spurred the establishment of planning commissions in Warsaw and other communities across Kosciusko County.

Since the early 1900's, orthopedics has grown to become the major industry in the county; and Warsaw is now the orthopedic capital of the world with major industry players such as Biomet, Inc., DePuy, Inc., Zimmer, Inc. and Medtronic Sofamor Danek.

The community has a rich history of evangelical influence, most notably that of Billy Sunday in the town of Winona Lake where families came for summer revivals and church camps heavily in the first quarter of the 1900s.

Agriculture, manufacturing, service and retail opportunities have spurred growth and population diversity in Kosciusko County; most notably in the past ten years. Census data from the year 2000 reveals that the county population has grown 13.4% from 65,294 to 74,057 in the past ten years, becoming the 19th most populated county in the state. Kosciusko County has the 8th largest Hispanic population of all Indiana counties, and has seen an increase of 196% in the Hispanic population since 1990.

**1 (B). Community Challenges:** Based upon your community's current status, describe your community's two most pressing challenges.

**Challenge #1:** *(200 words maximum)*

Kosciusko County, like other communities across the nation, strives to promote a strong and healthy lifestyle for all of its members. Data compiled through the Life Quest/Health Quest study revealed trends in our community that, if not addressed, would dramatically diminish the health and life quality of our community members. Research conducted through study circles exposed wide gaps in the administration of health services and inefficient use of resources. As a result, Kosciusko County has identified as its greatest challenge the issue of improved access to quality health care and the efficient utilization of resources.

From the Health Quest study we learned that the working poor in Kosciusko County relied on the Emergency Room as its primary care provider. Further, consumer credit data revealed that approximately 40% of the household income of lower income families with chronic medical conditions, including heart disease and diabetes, is spent on prescription medication. Only a few organizations in the County had both the resources and the ability to distribute the resources efficiently to the people in need. Now, as a result of a problem-solving cooperative, a countywide prescription assistance program serves every outlying area in Kosciusko County.

**Challenge #2:** *(200 words maximum)*

A burgeoning area, Kosciusko County has acted proactively to identify and address the challenges that inevitably arise from significant population growth. In 2000, Kosciusko County underwent a statistical analysis with the assistance of Life Quest, which provided a comprehensive demographic picture of our community. What we learned was that one of the greatest challenges facing our community, and one that will continue to affect the quality of life for citizens in our community, is cultural harmony.

Kosciusko County is largely considered an ethnically homogenous community, with 92.9% of the county identified as white/Caucasian in the 2000 census. However, school data indicates that the ethnic makeup of the community is more diverse. Despite the statistical uniformity, Kosciusko County has embraced ethnic and racial groups, and made diversity an important part of its present and future cultural heritage.

The Hispanic community is the fastest growing minority population in Kosciusko County. The expansion of this group brings with it unique challenges directly linked to language barriers. Inability to communicate limits access to education and services, and can prevent inclusion into many important aspects of community involvement, which presents a challenge to the individual and the community as a whole.

**1 (C). Community Celebration:** Why should your community be selected as an All-America City? Describe what makes your community a great place to live, work, and play. (300 word maximum)

We should be chosen, because Kosciusko County *is* an All-American Community. One need look no further than the local newspaper to see what a wonderful community we have. When a need for assistance is reported, many organizations are willing and available to help. Our community is full of individuals with tremendous hearts, overflowing with generosity. Cooperation among the different organizations within Kosciusko County is apparent by the success of meeting any task undertaken. Our community is not only meeting today's needs, but we are also preparing for the future. Kosciusko County has five foundations that offer permanent investment in our community.

Kosciusko County offers tremendous opportunity for employment. Employment offerings include manufacturing, services, and retail trade. Kosciusko County is home to the world leaders in the orthopedic industry. Our economy is strong, compared with other counties in our region. Unemployment is low at 1.8% and our poverty rate is well below the state average. Eighty percent of our citizens own their own homes and many resources are available for those who cannot afford housing. People take pride in their community and they are willing to invest in that community when ownership is at stake.

Kosciusko County offers many recreational opportunities. With over one hundred lakes, an athletic complex, and many parks scattered throughout the community, one never lacks for something to do. Summer concert series are offered free to the community, as well as cultural celebrations including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration luncheon, Cinco De Mayo weekend celebration, and the annual Gathering of the People Indian Pow Wow. Many opportunities exist free of charge to any interested participants.

Finally, we work together to address the ever-changing needs of our community and its' residents. We offer the remainder of this application to demonstrate our community celebration.

## **Part II: Community-Driven Projects**

Add lines as needed for your responses

Part II requires descriptions of three collaborative community projects that have significantly affected the community. Projects number One and Two should be drawn directly from the two community challenges stated above. Project Three should be reflective of what your community is doing for children and youth.

## **PROJECT ONE (Challenge #1)**

### **1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

In the beginning of 2000, the K21 Foundation, which makes health and wellness grants, received funding requests from three social service agencies to increase their prescription assistance funds. With K21's prompting, the agencies worked together to create an efficient, broad program that would meet the prescription needs of the uninsured and indigent. Program design took approximately four months. Then, the agencies submitted proposals to administer the program. A neutral panel of community leaders convened to review the proposals. Kosciusko Home Care & Hospice received the panel's recommendation because of their history with the maintenance drug program, they were a place all ages felt comfortable going, they had countywide reach, and because they had a solid plan. By the end of 2000, over \$1 million in maintenance drugs was given to over 300 income eligible residents; and almost 600 individuals have been served with emergency prescription vouchers to date.

### **2. Describe the relationship between this project and your first challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

Just over a year ago in Kosciusko County, if an uninsured mother took her child to the ER for treatment of an ear infection, her child would receive emergency care and one dose of antibiotic. If the mother couldn't afford the rest of the needed antibiotic, she would likely return to the ER in a matter of days. Hospital staff might call to see what social service agencies could help. If the child's ear infection fell in the beginning of the month, chances were strong that the mother could get a prescription voucher. However, if the infection came at the end of the month, the social service agencies would be out of money from their prescription funds.

At the same time, many of Kosciusko County's aging population were finding it increasingly difficult to afford maintenance prescriptions for conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Kosciusko Home Care & Hospice (KHC&H) offered a maintenance drug program to income eligible people, but the process could take up to two months.

These conditions coupled with K21's desire to see their grant monies go to people in need versus funding duplications in administration for similar programs at various agencies provided a forum for agencies to work together to find a solution. The various agencies all submitted grant requests by February 1st of 2000. Later that same month, they came together in discussion groups, hosted by a neutral facilitator, to design the program previously highlighted. By June, they had designed a program. By August, a neutral panel had chosen Kosciusko Home Care & Hospice as administrator of the program; and by October, the program was in operation. K21 Foundation funds the emergency voucher program and the administration costs for the maintenance drug program. Generous pharmaceutical companies donate the maintenance drugs.

### **3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

K21 Foundation sought the help of LifeQuest in facilitating a discussion group that would lead to an efficient, broad prescription assistance program. Salvation Army, Combined Community Services, REAL Services, Consumer Credit Counseling, Kosciusko Community Hospital, The Good Samaritan Fund, the county Health Department, township trustees, the Ministerial Association, Parish Nursing, and Kosciusko Community Homecare and Hospice all helped design the program. Local pharmacies including The Pill Box, Horizon, Park, Zales, Brennan, Marsh, Wal-Mart, and CVS agreed to accept and help administer the voucher program. The Mayor of Warsaw, the Executive Director of the local YMCA, the President of Grace College and two business professionals reviewed agency proposals to administer the program and made a recommendation that was

presented to the K21 Foundation. Kosciusko County Community Foundation funded start-up costs for a centrally located program office. The K21 Foundation funded \$236,000 in voucher funding for one year, with plans to fund it in the future, and \$29,487 in administrative funding for the maintenance drug program, with plans to offer financial support in the future. Finally, generous national pharmaceutical companies provide thousands of dollars at a time in free maintenance drugs. Three paid staff and 11 volunteers man the program. They offer office hours Monday through Friday at their central office and at least once a week in donated facilities in outlying community areas. The boards of Homecare and Hospice and the K21 Foundation are responsible for evaluating the program's success, along with an advisory board made up of the original agencies that helped design the program.

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

The voucher program served almost 600 people from October 2000 to date, each person receiving an average of \$84 in prescription vouchers. In the year 2000, having almost a full year to help people since it ran for an entire year at Kosciusko Home Care & Hospice, the maintenance drug program gave over \$1 million in maintenance drugs. These drugs helped people with conditions like heart disease and diabetes live without worry over whether to maintain their health or pay a utility bill. There is no longer any confusion on the part of health providers as to what agency to contact if they have a patient who can't afford his or her medication. Participating agencies found success in working together, and have come to the table on several occasions since to meet other community needs identified.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and email address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

Jill Christine, Director of Medication Assistance – a division of Kosciusko Home Care & Hospice, 1934 East Center Street, Warsaw, IN 46580 Phone: (219) 372-3604 Email: rxassist@kconline.com

**PROJECT TWO (Challenge #2)**

**1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

Sus Amigos, "Your Friends," is an organization built entirely on volunteer effort. Comprised of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds representing a variety of community sectors, Sus Amigos brings together those interested in bridging the gaps between the English and Spanish-speaking members of Kosciusko County created by language barriers and cultural distinctions. Its name symbolizes the spirit of cooperation that the organization represents.

Sus Amigos quickly evolved from its "discussion group" beginnings into an organized education and advocacy group. In its first twelve (12) months, Sus Amigos has successfully developed a community orientation video welcoming new Spanish speaking members to the community and providing them with valuable information regarding community services. In addition, Sus Amigos spearheaded a high school Latino Co-op program; and further, has partnered with Cardinal Center, a social service agency, to facilitate access to much needed services in the Hispanic community.



**2. Describe the relationship between this project and your second challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

Sus Amigos grew out of a rising need for education and advocacy in the Hispanic Community in Kosciusko County. With a steadily increasing population of non-English speaking members in the community, questions quickly emerged from numerous sectors of the county: How do we provide adequate services for citizens? How do we inform our employees of rules and benefits of employment? How do we gain access to social services? Prior to the year 2000, no central organization existed to respond to these critical yet basic issues.

The roots of Sus Amigos may be traced back to an education seminar developed by Dr. Tom Stalter, a faculty member at one of Kosciusko County's institutions of higher learning, Grace College. Many of the founding members of Sus Amigos were united in their concern for the issues cultural cooperation and harmony, as a result of their participation in Dr. Stalter's program.

Consistent with its educational roots, Sus Amigos has become an organization that emphasizes the goals of learning, access to information and full participation in community life. This organization has been one of Kosciusko County's rising stars, addressing the issues of ethnic diversity and cultural harmony with remarkable success.

Sus Amigos continues to grow in its support and membership. The educational efforts have drawn the attention of business, government agencies, and schools, eager to address the growing need for bilingual assistance in their sectors of society. The programs of Sus Amigos have been designed to address the most fundamental needs of the Hispanic community, providing information on healthcare, education, government services, and legal issues, including employment and immigration law.

The work of Sus Amigos will continue to improve the lives of many through the generosity of private donations, a growing volunteer base, and ongoing public and private grant solicitations.

**3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

Kosciusko County has a long history of citizen partnerships addressing issues facing community members. Sus Amigos continues to perpetuate this tradition of cooperation. Members of Sus Amigos represent the banking industry, the legal profession, law enforcement, education, health care industry and the arts to name a few. The participation of each of these sectors has been vital to the development and implementation of the programs Sus Amigos promotes.

The inaugural meeting generated the concept of a community orientation video to welcome newcomers to the community and educate them about services available. This idea quickly progressed from the drawing board to the film studio through the efforts of a local film production company and the tireless effort of volunteer members of Sus Amigos. The content of this video was developed from research and information obtained from both the business sector and government agencies. This video will debut in May 2001, with distribution of 3,000 videos to agencies, businesses and schools.

In its first year, Sus Amigos also launched a Latino Co-op Program for high school students in partnership with Warsaw Community Schools. This pilot program provides employment/mentoring opportunities for Hispanic students. One goal of the program is to partner students with professionals in the community in an effort to educate the students of vast professional opportunities within the community. Another goal is to encourage these

students to continue in their educational pursuits, by demonstrating the rewards of education through greater career opportunities and higher earning potential.

The year 2001 has seen the continued success of Sus Amigos through the partnership between Sus Amigos and Cardinal Center, a social service agency serving the disadvantaged members of Kosciusko County. This union will provide direct access for non-English member of the community to much needed services, including health care, financial assistance, and employment assistance.

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

Although in its infancy, Sus Amigos has proven itself to be a dynamo when addressing the needs of the Hispanic community. Their successful initiatives in cultural cooperation are unprecedented in our county.

A quantitative analysis of the programs of Sus Amigos demonstrates a broad-based outreach to the Hispanic members of the community. The community orientation video project will likely have the most far-reaching effect on newcomers to the community. Through private funding, a circulation of three thousand videos will enable employers to communicate essential information to new employees that will improve not only the quality of life for the employee, but also the quality of their productivity as an employee. Additionally, the three school districts serving the county have joined in the education efforts of Sus Amigos, and will display the video to new families and students in their districts.

The Latino Co-op program has already had a broad impact on the Hispanic community. On its face, the program's enrollment, of ten students, is a deceiving reflection of the quantitative effect of this program. The student participants are currently working in a number of vital service areas serving Hispanic citizens within the county, including Kosciusko County Hospital, and various government agencies. While the students benefit individually by learning important work skills, they also provide much needed assistance to these agencies by facilitating services to other Hispanic members of the community.

Finally, the partnership with Cardinal Center establishes Sus Amigos as a centralized service referral organization with unprecedented access to resource information and services for Hispanic members of our community.

Each of Sus Amigos' initiatives marks a substantial improvement in the quality of services provided to Hispanic members of the community. We look forward to new initiatives in the future.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and email address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

Yolanda Garza, Chairperson, Sus Amigos, 119 East Center Street, Warsaw, IN 46580 Phone: (219) 267-2503  
Email Address: yolanda\_garza@keybank.com

## PROJECT THREE

As a joint commitment to America's Promise, the National Civic League and Allstate have issued the Youth Initiative Challenge. We ask that at least one project from each All-America City applicant document ways in which the lives of children and youth have been tangibly improved.

### **1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

The Kosciusko YMCA is a leader in our community providing services to youth. An established cornerstone in our community, the YMCA's new and innovative youth programming provides opportunities for youth that find no equal in the county.

In 1999, the YMCA made a commitment to the youth in Kosciusko County by appointing a Teen and Family Director, whose responsibility it is to develop programming specifically for youth and teens. Commensurate with the YMCA's mission for youth "Sharing Christian Values in a World Gone Crazy," the YMCA has provided a safe haven for youth seeking support, encouragement, education and fun. In addition, through the generous of the Dekko Foundation, the YMCA also boasts a new youth center, equipped with a meeting area, game tables and large television. No longer do kids hang out in the YMCA's reception area lamenting the absence of anything to do.

### **2. Tell us how this project has affected the lives of children and youth in your community. Describe the challenge it is addressing, the history, and how it will be sustained? (300 word maximum)**

The economic prosperity enjoyed by our community has had negative residual effects on the youth of the county. A review of census data reveals that close to 1/3 of our entire population is under the age of 18. Combined this with the fact that the unemployment rate of Kosciusko County is under 2%, and that over 6% of the households in Kosciusko County are single-parent families. Many children in Kosciusko County are becoming latchkey kids, finding themselves without parental supervision or guidance after school. In addition, many are left alone because a parent is working overtime to meet production demands at their jobs.

The Kosciusko YMCA recognized the need for programs for these and other youth with education and entertainment in a safe environment. With the support of the Dekko Foundation, the YMCA established a Youth Center in 1999, which is open daily, after school. At last, the youth of the community have a place to call their own.

The Kosciusko YMCA serves youth of all ages, regardless of economic status. Membership scholarships are available to those unable to pay membership fees. Funding is provided from community donations and grants. To the YMCA's credit, no youth has ever been denied the opportunity to participate in the Y-Youth programs because of financial need.

The Kosciusko YMCA continues to enjoy the financial support of the YMCA national organization, and local foundations, businesses and community members. In addition, the YMCA's youth programs are also self-supporting with the income generated from program fees and its summer long day camp.

### **3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

The youth initiatives of the Kosciusko YMCA represent a cooperative effort between the YMCA and local businesses, educational institutions, foundations, and of greatest importance, the youth of the community.

Dialogue with Y-youth members has provided a highly valued source of information for the establishments seeking to provide youth programming. In 1999, Ryan Finney, Teen and Family Director, established a Teen Advisory Committee, comprised of approximately fifteen youth members. Meeting at least once a month, this committee brainstorms and discusses the activities that the youth in the community would like to see implemented. The roots of the most successful Y-Youth programs can be traced back to the Teen Advisory Committee meetings.

Generous donations from local foundations, businesses and community members, allow the YMCA to provide services to youth, at little or no cost. Local restaurants donate food for Y-youth events, as well. However, it is the time donated to youth by members of the community that is truly noteworthy. Lock-ins for teens, which provide an assortment of scheduled activities from 7:30 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. the next morning, are staffed by students from Grace College and other adults, who enjoy interacting with the kids. Grace College athletes and physical education students also help youth through their commitment to the Y-youth basketball program. The YMCA also boasts a Youth Day Camp which provides numerous educational and outdoor activities, including swimming, canoeing, and arts and crafts. Teen counselors and other adults interested in interacting with and mentoring to youth staff the camp.

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years. Tell us how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

Since 1999, the YMCA has proactively addressed the needs of youth in our community, as evidenced by the appointment of a Teen and Family Director, and the opening of a Youth Center. In 2000, programs headed by this division of the Kosciusko YMCA provided services to hundreds of youth in our community.

YMCA Teen Nights, consistently draw 50 to 60 kids looking for entertainment on a Friday night. The popular, Lock-Ins draw between 150 and 200 kids quarterly to enjoy the YMCA's amenities. The summer day camp has the most expansive outreach to the youth in the county. The camp, which runs from the day after school lets out until the Friday before school starts again, provided services to over 75 kids per week in 2000, with 100 kids per week projected for 2001. As with all other YMCA youth programs, scholarships are available to families seeking to send their children to the youth day camp at the YMCA.

The growing reputation of the YMCA among youth in Kosciusko County has resulted in greater participation by young people in the programs offered. The programs not only offer youth an entertainment outlet, but also teach them leadership skills, build self-confidence, and empower youth with the tools to have a positive impact in their community.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and email address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

Ryan Finney, Teen and Family Director, 1401 East Smith Street, Warsaw, IN 46580 Phone: (219) 269-9622  
Email address: rfymca@yahoo.com

## Part III: Civic Infrastructure

Describe your community. Using the four major sections of the National Civic League's newly revised *The Civic Index, Second Edition* (see [www.ncl.org](http://www.ncl.org) for more information), examine your community's civic infrastructure and civic capacity and describe how your community *lives* each of the answers to each of the following questions. Please include real examples of how your community has demonstrated its strengths and faced its challenges. The roman numerals correspond to parts of *The Civic Index, Second Edition*. Also see the application instructions for this section.

Add lines as needed for your responses

### **I. What is our community vision for the future? (300 word maximum)**

County government elected officials, business leaders and non-profit organizations share a common vision for Kosciusko County; and it is two-fold.

First, Kosciusko County will strive to retain a strong economy. Every aspect of our community's health is affected by the soundness of the economy. When the county can attract and keep industry, employment rates are high and consumer spending is strong. When employment rates are high, non-profits spend fewer resources on food, rent, and utility programs and can focus more on community-wide improvement challenges. When consumer confidence is high, non-profits see hearty donations that support outreach programs for those who continue to need assistance.

This vision can come to fruition by supporting local business. The support businesses need includes: equal access to quality K-12 education for all, post-secondary education opportunities made possible through scholarships and close-to-home classes, job training and continuing education specific to skill sets needed by local industry, and finally research and development facilities for continued growth of the orthopedic industry.

The second part of our vision is that Kosciusko County will strive to create an environment where the small communities that make-up the county can retain their individual characteristics while working together to meet common goals.

Long time basketball rivalries and turf issues among the communities have faded but are not entirely forgotten. In recent years, communities have begun to work together to affect positive economic change and community growth, as evidenced in the community "charettes" hosted in the summer to merge the city/town plans of multiple communities where appropriate.

Each community can still retain its historical identify and personality. Community pride will continue to be celebrated through events like the Milford Fest, Oswego Trader Days, Winona Lake Art Fair, Silver Lake Days, Mermaid Fest in North Webster, Pierceton Days and the Claypool Festival.

### **II (a). What roles do non-profits play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

Non-profits often play the role of catalyst and convenor for community projects. In addition, non-profits can often fund, find funding for, and contribute man-hours for community projects.

Combined Community Services (CCS) is often the first stop when seeking non-profit services, as CCS is our community's primary resource and referral agency. CCS provides individuals seeking services and other community agencies with continually updated resource listings in hard copy or via the Internet. That listing consists of over 250 nonprofit agencies including but not limited to nursing homes, substance abuse centers, hotlines, youth programs, food pantries, housing organizations, etc. The database is searchable. So, for example, a social worker can search for a client's resources by punching in applicable key words like, "domestic violence," "utility assistance," "child care" and so on. In addition, CCS has staff available to best guide a person seeking assistance, when they're unsure what services they need.

In the past two years, non-profits have become more willing to work together for community improvement, bypassing a variety of "turfism" issues. Some examples include the collaboration of non-profits in creating a county-wide medication assistance program, addressing critical affordable and transitional housing issues and collaboration on issues of cultural harmony to name a few. Non-profits, businesses and local government have supported (sometimes through funding, sometimes through participation) an effort called LifeQuest. LifeQuest uses study circles to address community needs. Ultimately, action groups accept the challenges issued by the various study circles.

Finally, increased financial support of non-profits from the community indicates the general public recognizes the important role non-profits play in meeting needs. The 2000 Kosciusko County United Way campaign is a great example of the community's recognition of the successes of non-profits. They raised over \$1.4 million dollars. For a community of approximately 70,000 people, we think that's great!

**II (b). What roles do businesses play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

Businesses contribute to our community in many ways. Area businesses encourage their employees to make a community commitment through board appointments, volunteerism, and financial contributions. It is very important to our community that this business initiative continues. When businesses become actively involved, they are more apt to remain in the community when other opportunities present themselves elsewhere.

Area business leaders ensure that their employees provide leadership skills required to fulfill board appointments, allow their employees time to serve these commitments, and continue to identify young, innovative leaders of tomorrow to continue this successful trend. Civic and business people constitute approximately 85% of local board appointments in Kosciusko County.

Our local United Way campaign is coordinated each year with leadership from throughout the business community. Campaign chairpersons are selected from local businesses and are allowed, even encouraged, to commit to this responsibility on behalf of their employer. Kosciusko County has recognized significant growth in our United Way Campaign over the past 10 years. We have gone from donations totaling \$640,000 to \$1.4 Million dollars in the 2000 campaign, an effort chaired by local business leaders. The local March of Dimes Jail and Bail program has also experienced great success over the past years. What could be more fun than to have one of your co-workers arrested by the local authorities and then post bail money (contributions to the March of Dimes) to have them released? This entire event is held during business hours and largely successful due to the involvement of businesses in our community.

Businesses in Kosciusko County, themselves, contribute financial support to many organizations and programs. Whether it is a donation to the local little league organization or sponsoring renovation of a room at a historical hotel, businesses are committed financially to encouraging improvement and growth in our community.

**II (c). What role does government play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

Kosciusko County Commission is comprised of three elected commissioners, who are responsible for leading the county toward future growth and prosperity. The Kosciusko County Council, made up of seven councilpersons, four elected based on geographic boundaries, and three at large members, acts as the financial managers of county revenues. This system provides a check and balance system to ensure that government spending of tax dollars is wise and that decisions made are fair for all citizens.

In the government sector, choices are made daily which directly impact the quality of life for our citizens. Decisions regarding infrastructure development and improvement shape the way Kosciusko County will deal with future issues of population growth and business development. The Kosciusko County Area Planning Commission addresses land use and development issues for the county. The duties of the KCAP include addressing land use questions, presenting rezoning recommendations to the County Commissioners and town boards, and enforcing county zoning ordinances. The expertise regarding land use and planning provided by KCAP enables local decision-making bodies to make careful decisions, which will have long-ranging effects on their jurisdictions, and the county as a whole.

Other government agencies contributing to the improvement and welfare of the community are the Health Department and the Solid Waste Management District. The Health Department provides vital services focusing on overall health issues including free child immunizations, a Maternal & Child Health Care Coordination Program/Early Start Prenatal Clinic, and a Children's Special Health Care Program. The Solid Waste Management District has developed education initiatives promoting waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. Their waste assessment program for businesses has resulted in reduced waste production, improved overall efficiency and productivity of local business, and helped the local environment.

**II (d). What is the extent and nature of citizen participation in community improvement efforts? (300 word maximum)**

Residents of Kosciusko County have ample opportunities to serve their community through appointments to volunteer boards and committees serving a variety of community interests. Kosciusko Leadership Academy (KLA) was born out of the desire by community leaders 20 years ago to find new and diverse faces to serve on various community task forces. It would have been easy for this agricultural community to keep decision-making power at bay, but they had a broader vision for their community. Each year since, KLA graduates approximately 30 promising community leaders with a charge to serve their community. Participants are nominated by their companies or organizations, which agree to support their time commitment and pay their academy fee. Scholarships are awarded to nominees of non-profit organizations. A selection committee of former KLA graduates chooses the year's participants. Graduates leave the academy after 9 months having learned about many aspects of the community including local and state government, non-profits, health care, economic development, agriculture, industry, law enforcement and the court system. Each KLA member must participate in a "white paper project," where he seeks out a way to address a community need. Along with his team members, he presents his project to community leaders. An example of a community project that got its start as a white paper project is the Lake City Greenway bicycle and fitness trails. In addition to KLA, individuals can serve at a variety of levels from participation in local government to volunteering at social service agencies. Finally, anyone in the community can participate in a variety of study circles ongoing at any given time. Study circle topics have included: medical/dental care accessibility, childcare, cultural harmony, family literacy, affordable housing, emergency preparedness, youth issues and more.

**III (a). How does our community recognize and celebrate its diversity? (300 word maximum)**

Celebrations abound that allow each individual an opportunity to celebrate heritage in Kosciusko County. Committees formed by local citizens to oversee the celebrations each year make these events successful. These committees work in conjunction with local citizens to ensure authenticity in the celebrations and ceremonies performed. Without community involvement, these celebrations would dwindle and fail. We are all from diverse backgrounds, but celebration of that fact is what brings our community together.

Each January, the community joins in honoring the memory and message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a luncheon event. Many people from various walks of life join together for this celebration of diversity. Past observances have included choirs from local schools, re-enactment of Dr. King's famous speeches, and presentations from various civic leaders from our community.

We are able to celebrate the Latino heritage each May with the annual Cinco de Mayo festival. This event has grown from an afternoon celebration in the local school systems to a weekend festival held centrally in our community. Cinco de Mayo has grown in size and reputation in the last two years. Authentic food is prepared, local groups perform music and ceremonies, and life is celebrated with friends and families. Several thousand individuals from throughout North-Central Indiana come together in our community for this celebration.

Finally, each community celebrates its individual history and flavor with community events like the Milford Fest, Oswego Trader Days, Mentone Egg Festival, Winona Lake Art Fair, Silver Lake Days, Mermaid Fest in North Webster, Pierceton Days and the Claypool Festival.

**III (b). How does our community work with neighboring communities to address shared challenges? Is there a shared regional vision? (300 word maximum)**

The community foundation offers a good example of how the communities within our county work together and how our county works with surrounding counties. The community foundation serves its constituents by holding endowments for various agencies providing permanent support, by serving as a catalyst and convenor for community initiatives and by funding a variety of community interests including arts & culture, education & scholarship, recreation, human services, health and civic. Recently, the Kosciusko County Community Foundation worked with other community foundations in Whitley, LaGrange and Stueben Counties to uncover ways to incorporate the 40 development assets as named by the Search Institute into community programs for youth. In addition, these counties are working together to address their most pressing educational needs through a challenge grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. Kosciusko Leadership Academy board members have helped start leadership academies in LaGrange and Whitley Counties. County commissioners have shared the ideas behind having a "county administer" with neighboring counties that observed how effectively the position coordinated Kosciusko County's services. Kosciusko County has worked with neighboring counties to support regional educational facilities like Ivy Tech and Indiana University Purdue University at Ft. Wayne, including a Warsaw branch. The community supports and provides cultural opportunities throughout the region with the Ft. Wayne Philharmonic and the Wagon Wheel Theatre. Finally, the county works with others in supporting regional service agencies such as the AIDS Task Force of Northeast Indiana and the Northern Indiana Workforce Investment Board, Inc.

**IV. How does your community strengthen its ability to solve problems? (300 word maximum)**

As evidenced by previous portions of this application, the community of Kosciusko County affects change in a very grass roots style. "Everyday" citizens are encouraged to let their voices be heard through participation in community study circles, attendance at local government council meetings, by serving on various community



boards and by volunteering for causes they care about. Citizens with a passion for a community improvement find support for their causes. A recent example of this was the efforts of a local woman, Ann Sweet, who had lost a daughter to a traffic fatality, to get red light cameras at busy intersections. With support from her neighbors and local government, Ann Sweet's proposal is now pending state legislation that would allow communities across Indiana to decide if they had a need for a camera. This legislation could prove to be lifesaving for residents of Kosciusko County, who live with US Highway 30 running through their community. The stretch of 30 that runs through Warsaw was, at one time, labeled the second most deadly stretch of road in Indiana.

Citizens can participate in a variety of other unique ways including participation in the Citizens Police Academy, where they learn how to contribute to the safety of their neighborhoods.

How does Kosciusko County solve problems? With a lot of input from the varied communities within our county. Kosciusko County continues to strengthen their problem solving skills by maintaining healthy businesses, non-profits and government sectors. We understand that it takes all of us working together to strengthen our ability to tackle tough issues.

*End of Application*

See [www.ncl.org](http://www.ncl.org) or the application instructions for detailed application instructions and sample applications from previous All-America City Winners!