

Jim Hardesty – A Life of Giving Back

"I have to feel, as I have always felt, that you have to do for your community," Starke County Community Foundation board member, Jim Hardesty said, "and I've been very lucky."

In fact, many would say that Starke County was lucky when ten years ago Frank Allen a number of civic minded community members, including Hardesty, to come to a meeting. That meeting would eventually lead to the formation of the Community Foundation, of which Hardesty has played an active part since.

"I have a heritage here," Hardesty, who continues to farm his family's homestead, remarked. "My grandparents came here after the Civil War. We've been here a long time."

Driven by a desire to do something for his community, Hardesty has given back to Starke County and the town of Hamlet in many ways. He wrote the history of Hamlet as well as the history of the Starke County Courthouse (which was published in hardback in 1997). He was active in the Hamlet Centennial celebration, and has served the Starke County Historical Society, Starke County 4-H, Hamlet Lions Club, Farm Bureau and Co-Op, Davis Township Advisory Board, Hamlet United Methodist Church, and Hamlet Bank (now 1st Source).

The 1942 Purdue grad has also been a strong supporter and advocate for Ancilla College. Recognizing the great value the community college brings to the area; he has actively worked to raise funds and has served on the board of trustees for a number of years. In 2003, Ancilla College honored him for his support by giving him an honorary doctorate degree. He is currently a trustee emeritus for the school.

He has been an active fundraiser for many projects that benefit Starke County through the Community Foundation. Not only has he given the foundation his time, but he has created two family/memorial permanently endowed funds that will forever support causes dear to him. It is Jim's hope that by creating these funds, it will also encourage other community members to establish funds permanently endowed family funds of their own.

Of his time on the board, what makes Hardesty the proudest?

"We've been able to raise over 3 million dollars in funds, the income of which is to go for the benefit of the people of Starke County," he explained. "If I played any part of it, I should feel good about it."



Starke County Community Foundation supporters
Jim Hardesty and Mat Swanson

Hardesty hopes to see the endowments grow by two more million over the coming years, and he wants to see the foundation continue to be a good steward of gifts with prudent grant making. His term on the Starke County Community Foundation board will finish in 2008. He will continue to serve as an honorary trustee of the Northern Indiana Community Foundation Board—on which he has represented Starke County for the last decade.

He is quick to give credit to that original core group of Community Foundation volunteers and board members, such as Arlowa Vorm, Cherry Gumz, June Binkley, and Barb McLaughlin.

“If I have done as much as the others have, I’m lucky,” he commented. “I have given ten years of time, and I’ve enjoyed every bit of it!”