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For Immediate Release

## MANISTEE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION RECEIVES GRANT TO SUPPORT "EXPLORE THE SHORES" PROGRAM

**Manistee, Michigan** - The Manistee County Community Foundation announced today a grant of \$21,000 from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to support expansion and promotion of the *Explore the Shores* program. The program was founded by the Community Foundation along with a host of national, state and local partners to make Manistee County the premier destination for people of all ages and abilities to access, use, and enjoy its lakes, rivers, Lake Michigan shoreline and other water resources.

"Manistee County has a bounty of water resources in the heart of the Great Lakes, the source of 20 percent of the world's supply of fresh water," said George Wagoner, member of the Community Foundation's Board of Directors. "This grant will enable the rapid expansion of the *Explore the Shores* program -- places throughout our county to be used and enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities -- whether they live and work here or are visitors seeking to enjoy our water-rich county and the four season opportunities that our resources provide."

Wagoner, a retired obstetrician, has a particular interest in training people of all ages about how to be "drown proof" so that they may safely enjoy water recreation to its fullest.

"*Explore the Shores* is an outgrowth of the County's first visioning effort, Envision Manistee County, and a follow up initiative led by the Easter Seals organization, Envision Accessible Manistee," said Laura Heintzelman, Executive Director of the Community Foundation. "With the support of financial assistance from Michigan Easter Seals, the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, the Department of Natural Resources - Environment and now, the Michigan Coastal Management Program, we are seeking to attain the vision of the program to have 50 *Explore the Shores* sites by 2020 that will bring 1 million new visitors to Manistee County."

Heintzelman said that the grant will be used to develop a web site and other communications materials to promote tourism and encourage use of *Explore the Shores* locations, including interpretive displays and signage. Funding will also be used to identify and seek resources to develop new sites and to explore opportunities for sustaining the program in support of universal access.

The grant will be managed by the Alliance for Economic Success under an agreement with the Community Foundation. The Alliance coordinates the *Explore the Shores* program in partnership with the Community Foundation and others.

By the end of 2010 *Explore the Shores* locations will include the following locations that have been developed with funding from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust:

- The Stronach Boat Launch and the new universally accessible fishing pier that is near the mouth of the Little Manistee River.
- The Arthur Street Boat launch in the City of Manistee that will also include a universally accessible fishing pier.
- The Bar Lake outlet to Lake Michigan on Lakeshore Road in Manistee Township.
- The Rainbow Bend Access Site on the Big Manistee River, managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), where a walkway and universally accessible fishing pier will be installed.
- The Big Manistee River, near the mouth of Bear Creek, also managed by the USFS, where a walkway and universally accessible fishing pier will be installed.

Other *Explore the Shores* locations include:

- The lift facility in the City of Manistee's Municipal Marina to help people who use wheelchairs in and out of boats
- The Beach House and walkway at the City of Manistee's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Beach and the walkway at the 1<sup>st</sup> Street Beach.

"It's great to see these tangible results come out of community visioning," said By Lyon, an advisor to the Community Foundation Board. "Within ten years, it's estimated that over half of our County's population will be age 65 or older. Nationally, 37 percent of people that age have some kind of disability. It's important that we develop opportunities for everyone, now and in the future, to enjoy the wonders of water throughout Manistee County."

"We could not be more impressed to see how Manistee County and a host of funding sources are leveraging their environment to ensure that people living with disabilities have the opportunities and freedom to use, enjoy and benefit from access to the County's incredible water-rich environment," said Marie Maus, Director of Marketing & Communications for Easter Seals Project Action. "The USDA and Easter Seals funded efforts to develop Envision Accessible Manistee have paid off in ways we could never have fully anticipated. This is a model for Michigan and the country."

"With the support of a Leadership Team for the *Explore the Shores* Program, we have also recently completed grant applications seeking funds for sites at Spirit of the Woods to upgrade the walkway and fishing pier on Bear Creek, the City of Manistee's launch site on 9<sup>th</sup> Street and at the 1<sup>st</sup> Street Beach where we have sought funds for a new bath and beach house," said Cyndy Fuller, Executive Director of the Alliance for Economic Success. "Our water resources have been historically significant to the economic well-being of our County, including our deep-water port that continues to support over 1,000 manufacturing jobs. The *Explore the Shores* program is a terrific way to develop and promote our County's waters to benefit all interests, including our important tourism industry."

Fuller said that about \$1 million from various sources has been secured since 2008 to develop the *Explore the Shores* program. Abonmarche, Inc. is coordinating site development of *Explore the Shores* sites, in partnership with the *Explore the Shores* Leadership Team and governmental units that own the location of the sites. Every effort is made to develop *Explore the Shores* sites with durable, low maintenance materials in ways that compliment and protect fragile environments. Anyone interested in serving on

the *Explore the Shores* Leadership Team should contact the Alliance for Economic Success at 231-723-4325.

For more information about the Manistee County Community Foundation visit [www.manisteefoundation.org](http://www.manisteefoundation.org) or call (231) 723-7269.

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