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For Immediate Release

**“A CATALYST FOR POSITIVE CHANGE”
RESULTS OF COUNTY-WIDE VISIONING REPORTED BY
MANISTEE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

Manistee, Michigan - Calling it a “catalyst for positive change,” the Manistee County Community Foundation has reported the results of a \$300,000 grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to help implement a 16-month county-wide visioning effort completed in 2006, *Envision Manistee County*. Entitled *Implementing Envision Manistee County*, the report is available on line at www.manisteefoundation.org. A limited supply of hard copies and copies on disc can be obtained by contacting the Alliance for Economic Success at 231-723-4325.

The report describes progress to implement the strategies and actions that were developed by teams of *Envision Manistee County* volunteers encompassing six quality of life areas: economy and employment; government and infrastructure; natural resources and recreation; arts and culture; youth and education; and health and human services.

The report also explains progress to achieve five measures that were established at the time Kellogg Foundation funding was obtained in 2007. The measures include:

- Has the project strengthened leadership and capacity to sustain *Envision Manistee County* as an ongoing process for identifying and responding to priorities?
- Are best practices and evaluation being used to guide decisions?
- Has philanthropy increased?
- Has the project leveraged other resources?
- What lessons learned should be shared?

The report highlights a number of accomplishments and initiatives made possible through the Kellogg Foundation grant, including:

- The completion of the Onekama Community Master Plan, a joint master plan between the Village of Onekama and Onekama Township, and steps to implement the Plan.
- The *Explore the Shores* initiative that has secured funding toward the goal of making Manistee County a premier destination for people of all ages and abilities to the County’s water resources.
- The transformation of the County’s economic development strategy, leading to the formation of the Alliance for Economic Success.
- The affiliation between the Manistee County Community Foundation and the Community Foundation *for* Muskegon County, a model for shared services and economy of scale that has provided the Manistee Foundation with considerable assistance to develop philanthropy, enhance donor services, and establish new funds, including scholarships. The Manistee County Community Foundation offers the findings, results and surveys involved with *Envision Manistee County* as

resources for donors to consider in their charitable giving. The Foundation also uses *Envision* to guide its grantmaking.

- The development of a *Community of Choice* strategy, led by the Alliance for Economic Success, focused on developing and implementing best practices for community capacity building and for securing public and private financial assistance to achieve goals for the economic well-being and quality of life of the county. Under this strategy, the Alliance would partner with the Manistee County Community Foundation in encouraging the development of endowments and other funding measures to address County needs.

In addition to the Kellogg Foundation grant, the report summarizes the funding sources and purposes for over \$5 million that has been secured and allocated toward strategies, goals and action plans identified in the *Envision Manistee County* process. Funders to date, in addition to the Kellogg Foundation, include: Oleson Foundation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment; Michigan Easter Seals; Great Lakes Fishery Trust; Michigan Economic Development Corporation; U. S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development; Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth; U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; Consumers Energy Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, United Way of Manistee County and the Manistee County Community Foundation.

The report calls for:

- An update to *Envision Manistee County* to revisit County-wide needs and priorities.
- The development of more quantifiable measures to assess the current conditions of the County and to set specific goals for the future.
- The formation of a Funder Collaborative to support implementation activities.
- A “world class” leadership development program for existing and future elected and non-elected county leaders.
- Updating *Envision* to support collaborative solutions involving local governments, education, non-profit organizations and public-private ventures. The report also recommended that the *Envision* update investigate opportunities for collaboration with partners outside of Manistee County to respond to County needs and, where possible, achieving economies of scale.

The *Implementing Envision Manistee County* report will be distributed to Manistee County interests and organizations and governments throughout Michigan.

“This report will be of value to any community that is considering visioning as an approach to develop a blue-print for their future,” said Beth McCarthy, chair of the Manistee County Community Foundation Board. “We also hope that Manistee County interests will read the full report and attachments so that we can work together to update Manistee County’s blueprint in a way that unifies all around common visions and goals for our future.”

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