

Press Release

February 20, 2004

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ANDERSON VALLEY ELDERHOME PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

By Susanne Norgard, Executive Director, Community Foundation of Mendocino County

In January 2002, the Community Foundation of Mendocino County gave a grant to the Anderson Valley ElderHome Project -- a group of community volunteers who had a dream of building a 15 bed residential facility for elder care in the Valley. The grant was used as "seed money", enabling the volunteers to hire a professional grant writer who could apply for funds from large statewide foundations. Their persistence paid off and as a result they recently received \$50,000 from The California Endowment to fund a Project Manager for one year.

Peggy Miniclier, a Family Nurse Practitioner at the Anderson Valley Health Clinic and a Board Member of the ElderHome Project is no stranger to getting things done. She started the health clinic in Anderson Valley twenty-eight years ago and is familiar with the local community and its needs. She says the other ElderHome Board Members are like her -- people in their 50's and older who have watched seniors in the Valley struggle to stay at home with limited resources. They want to make sure that these seniors don't have to leave their life-long community when their finances become scarce.

The idea for an elderhome has been developing for several years now. The ElderHome Board envisions a residential home where seniors can live independently, with communal meals and health support services available. When I asked Peggy about other small communities that have figured out how to make it possible for seniors to remain in their communities as they age, she said there really are no other models. They may be the first!

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The ElderHome Project has identified a site at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds that is not currently being utilized except for remote parking. The feasibility study, site evaluation and soil tests have been completed, and the County Board of Supervisors will have the final say as to whether this site can be used for the project. The Project Manager who is being hired with the grant funds will be responsible for the next phase of the project, which includes the pre-construction phase of producing the architectural plans.

The grant report to the Community Foundation notes that the project could have not moved forward without the seed money from the Community Foundation because the skills needed in a grant writer are not available on a volunteer basis. The report also goes on to note, "Successful projects seem to come from the grassroots up, not the top down."

One of the roles of the Community Foundation is to assist volunteers who have a vision of how to improve their community. Providing the seed money that can grow into bigger grants and funding sources is often the way we do this. To find out more, visit our website at www.communityfound.org.

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