



Mercer County: Better Together

Success through collaboration.

#MCBT

Local Planning Process Results in Countywide Action Plan, New Organization

Mercer County, IL – March 21st – In September of 2016 Mercer County, communities, local businesses, individuals and the Looser-Flake Charitable Foundation joined forces, funding a countywide planning process to discover what matters most to county residents. During an 18-month period, more than 700 residents shared their feedback at community forums, through surveys and in focus groups. Kyle McEwen was hired to oversee the process, which was titled “Mercer County: Better Together”.

Resident ideas were compiled into a countywide action plan that was finalized in February of 2018. The plan outlines priority work to be accomplished, maps out timelines, identifies organizations, municipalities or entities to take lead or supporting roles and recommends the continuation of Mercer County: Better Together (MCBT) to implement the plan. As of March, MCBT has transitioned into a community and economic development organization, serving as the backbone organization to implement the action plan. Kyle McEwen will continue as Executive Director of MCBT, which will accomplish the priority work identified through the planning process. Kyle will work under the guidance of the MCBT Board of Directors, which is currently made up of 20 members. Board members from across Mercer County were selected following a public application process.

Board members include: Kirk Doonan (Viola), Brian Mills (Eliza), Audrey Bryant (Joy), Justina Abbadusky (New Boston), Bev Gray (Aledo), Jennifer Hamerlinck, Ryan Latko (Aledo), Rick Martin (Eliza), Stephanie McMeekan (Matherville), Kraig McPeek (Aledo), Troy Nimrick (New Windsor), Jan Occhi (Keithsburg), Ted Rogalski (Aledo), Carol Rogers (North Henderson), Rusty Ruggles (Aledo), Joy Shackelford (Preemption), Tarah Sipes (Aledo), Ralph Smith (New Windsor), Bob Springer (Seaton), Don Wilken (Joy).

Board member Carol Rogers, who also serves as North Henderson Village Board President, said the planning process has already made a difference. “Since becoming involved in MCBT, North Henderson is no longer a little village lost in the corner of the county- it is a piece of a much larger puzzle.” Rogers noted, “MCBT has connected me with the other village officials to help me learn my role and what resources are available to our community.”

Moving forward the countywide action plan serves as the work plan for the MCBT organization and delivers benefits to Mercer County and its communities.

“The action plan provides opportunities to potentially secure additional grants to support Mercer County and its communities in three key ways,” said Al Zwilling, Foundation and Community Outreach Program Director for Mercer Foundation for Health. “It demonstrates the completion of a thorough needs assessment by communities and the county, it presents collaborative grant project opportunities which may impact multiple communities, and it allows for federal funding eligibility, as MCBT is included in the Bi-State Regional Commission’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). These criteria are important when applying for US Economic Development and USDA Rural Development grants.”

If you would like more information on the Mercer County: Better Together organization or the countywide planning process, please contact Executive Director Kyle McEwen using the contact information below.

CONTACT:

Kyle McEwen
Executive Director, Mercer County: Better Together
PO Box 73 / Aledo, IL 61231
(309) 574-3123
kyle@mcbettertogether.org / www.mcbettertogether.org
