

Regional foundation will serve Heartland

Heartland will focus on education, fundraising

By **KALEY LYON**
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A new community foundation has been formed to benefit local entities and to provide area residents with the option of donating gifts to one organization that can distribute the funds to organizations.

Heartland Community Foundation has been in planning phases for years and is ready to move forward after a board of directors was appointed last month, said Daron Jamison, foundation chairman.

"The thing we found is that there is not a foundation that is really designated to be what I'll call a community foundation," Jamison said. "There are some communities within the area that do have their own foundation, but nothing like Heartland in terms of its ability to serve a broader area."

The name Heartland was chosen because the founda-

tion will serve an area larger than the city of Hays and Ellis County, he said.

The foundation will offer services to surrounding counties, and the 11-person board of directors includes representatives from Ellis, Trego and Rooks counties.

An affiliate of Greater Salina Foundation, Heartland will rely upon expertise from the Salina entity, but all decision-making will be local, Jamison said.

Jamison said community feedback to the new entity has been positive.

"I think people are very excited about what this could do for the communities in the west-central Kansas area," he said. "This is an opportunity for people to see a need in their community."

The foundation soon will launch a founder's campaign to raise funds, but the primary function of the organization will be to educate citizens about the foundation and community benefits, Jamison said.

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Doug Greer, foundation secretary, said establishing the foundation began with a group of people in the Community Action Coalition of Ellis County.

Before the organization was formed, Hays was one of the largest communities in the state without such a foundation, Greer said.

"The need was identified as a way for people to have some money available for local projects," Geer said. "It's just coming into fruition now."

Greer, executive director of the Hays Area Children's Cen-

ter, said the foundation will provide a much-needed service for local nonprofit organizations. In fact, the children's center had discussed forming a foundation of their own before the community foundation had been established, he said.

"I think it's going to benefit a lot of organizations in town and enable people to give, and give based on their individual needs and preferences," Geer said. "We're looking for good things — I think it's going to be very positive."

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