



News Release

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Muhlenberg County Unveils Innovative Economic Development Partnership

Government, business and philanthropic organizations have joined forces to launch the Muhlenberg Alliance for Progress (MAP), a groundbreaking economic development partnership. This innovative alliance will chart a course for the economic future of Muhlenberg County and serve as a model for rural communities throughout the State and beyond. Through County support made possible by the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation and Coal Severance dollars, as well as civic financial contributions, MAP will unleash the true economic potential of Muhlenberg County as it seeks to attract desirable jobs and lasting business investment.

MAP will build upon the real estate development initiatives of Muhlenberg County Government and the Muhlenberg Industrial Development Corporation by taking the show on the road to aggressively promote the Muhlenberg County Industrial Park, Bluegrass Crossings Regional Business Centre, Paradise Regional Business Park and other properties. It will team with the Greater Muhlenberg Chamber of Commerce, Muhlenberg Community College and others to tackle the needs of existing Muhlenberg County firms and address transportation, infrastructure, workforce or other issues that may otherwise hamper economic development in Muhlenberg County. It will build upon the County's entrepreneurial heritage by supporting the next generation of aspiring business owners. And it will work in partnership with State economic development authorities, university officials, utilities and other allies already committed to the organization's success.

The full-time staff of MAP will work to diversify the Muhlenberg County economy while at the same time supporting the next generation of the coal industry, capturing defense-related investment tied to the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center and seeking out other unique opportunities that create sought-after jobs for Muhlenberg County residents.

In 2008, a \$50 million foundation administered by the Community Foundation of Louisville was created by Felix E. Martin Jr.'s estate, a long-time Muhlenberg County resident who wanted the foundation to enrich the lives of his fellow citizens. The first action of the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation was to commission research to ask residents what they felt were the greatest needs of Muhlenberg County. The response was clear - economic development is the County's number one priority. It was this resounding call for economic support that led to the creation of MAP. "This public-private effort was a singular focus toward a better future for the citizens of Muhlenberg County" stated Muhlenberg County Judge/Executive Rick Newman. "Mr. Martin left a



legacy that can help transform Muhlenberg County, and the Martin Foundation is committed to generating economic opportunity in the community Mr. Martin proudly called home” said Kathy Steward Jacobi, President, Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation.

Experts have long agreed that economic development is a team sport. To achieve success, even the best, most enthusiastic community champions need a structure to work within, a mechanism to harness their energy and pride, and a game plan on which they can agree and implement jointly. Armed with this understanding, County Government, prominent businesses, civic organizations and higher education, in partnership with the Martin Foundation and with support of City Governments, surmised that Muhlenberg County needed a forward-thinking, public-private organization to lead its economic charge. Prager Company, a nationally recognized economic advisory firm, was retained to design and help launch what has become the Muhlenberg Alliance for Progress.

“Muhlenberg County has far more to offer than is readily apparent to the casual observer. Although many business decision-makers examine a community on what it has and is today, a better gauge of Muhlenberg County is what it is preparing to become tomorrow” emphasized Adam Prager, President of Prager Company. “Growing collaboration among elected leaders, the emergence of multi-county regional partnership, two rapidly developing industrial parks, an expanding community college, improving infrastructure, elevating public school quality, a pending interstate, considerable philanthropic support, and a groundbreaking economic development organization to harness all of this portent a brighter economic future for Muhlenberg County.”

Although Muhlenberg County has many assets for prospective businesses and their employees, these assets are not well known, nor have they been sufficiently leveraged. MAP will be laser targeted in its strategies to address this. “In a time of shrinking government budgets and pervasive economic uncertainty, this alliance and creative use of home grown philanthropy will be of immense value to our county and serve as a model for other rural communities trying to improve the lives of their residents as well. We are so excited to launch the Muhlenberg Alliance for Progress.” said Peggy Williams, President, Muhlenberg Industrial Development Corporation.

MAP is in the process of hiring a highly trained, executive staff and identifying office space for its operations. MAP expects to be operational in early January 2011.

To learn more about the Foundation, visit www.FelixMartinFoundation.org or call the Foundation at (270) 977-9194 (a local call from Muhlenberg County).

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