



News Release

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Muhlenberg County, Kentucky Charts a Course for its Economic Future through Innovative 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 Kentucky's Muhlenberg County and serve as a model for rural communities throughout the State and beyond. Supported by philanthropic, government and civic financial contributions, MAP will unleash the true potential of this county nestled in Western Kentucky's coal country.

MAP's unique alliance was made possible by one man's vision for Muhlenberg County. When Felix E. Martin, Jr. passed away in 2007, he left the bulk of his estate -- \$50 million -- to create the Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation and forge a better future for Muhlenberg County. Administered by the Community Foundation of Louisville, the Martin Foundation commissioned research to ask Muhlenberg County residents what they felt were the community's greatest needs. The response was clear -- economic development was the top priority that needed to be addressed. Indeed, rural Muhlenberg County has struggled economically and missed out on job growth and business investment that benefited many other communities before the recession. "Mr. Martin left a legacy that can help transform Muhlenberg County, and the Martin Foundation is wholly committed to generating economic opportunity in this community that Mr. Martin proudly called home" said Kathy Steward Jacobi, President, Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation.

The County has a long history of successful entrepreneurship. But economic development is a team sport. Often even the best, most enthusiastic players need a structure to work within, a mechanism to harness this 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, with support of City Governments and in partnership with the Martin Foundation, sought a solution to the stalled economic growth. "This effort was a singular focus toward a better future for the citizens of Muhlenberg County" stated Muhlenberg County Judge/Executive Rick Newman.

The group surmised that Muhlenberg County needed a forward-thinking, public-private organization to lead the economic charge. Prager Company, a nationally recognized economic advisory firm, was retained to design and help launch what eventually became 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 portend a brighter economic future for Muhlenberg County.”

Although the County has many assets for prospective businesses and their employees, by virtue of its location, these assets are not well known, nor are they sufficiently leveraged. MAP will pursue a number of strategies to address this. It will:

- Aggressively promote the County to outside investors
- Provide the tools necessary for its existing businesses to grow and thrive
- Seek out creative revenue generating opportunities for coal and its emerging technologies as that industry continues its resurgence
- Help capture defense-related investment in tandem with Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center, a growing Army National Guard facility in the County
- Leverage the County’s industrial property partnerships with neighboring counties to generate high paying jobs for local residents.

“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” said Peggy Williams, President, Muhlenberg Industrial Development Corporation.

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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