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Knight Foundation pledges more cash for Macon projects

One of the ways to help people contribute to a community is by making sure the people who live there are engaged and informed.

To that end, the Knight Foundation has pledged an additional \$2.5 million to Macon to be doled out over the next seven years to foster projects proposed by nonprofit agencies in Middle Georgia to help Macon residents become more engaged.

“The Knight Foundation is focused on targeted grant-making,” said Beverly Blake, the Knight Foundation’s program director in Macon. “We are supporting projects that create community engagement that will further lead to transformative changes in the community. The community won’t thrive if people do not become engaged in the life of the community.”

The Knight Foundation, based out of Miami, was founded by brothers John S. and James L. Knight, to promote projects that improve the communities where they once owned newspapers.

The foundation has awarded about \$18.3 million in total grant money to Macon since 2000, according to a news release.

The new funding will be used in partnership with the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Blake said. In addition, another \$1 million has been pledged to Milledgeville, another Knight Foundation city.

Kathryn Dennis, president of the Community Foundation, said the program is somewhat different than another Knight program in Macon — the Knight Neighborhood Challenge. In that program, residents of the College Hill Corridor section of Macon write grant proposals that are then assessed by both foundations for activities in the corridor.

The \$2.5 million, however, will go to a fund that's already endowed for projects being worked on by nonprofit agencies.

Rather than applying for grants, those agencies can pitch their ideas to Dennis and Blake for consideration.

Or the Knight Foundation and the Community Foundation might seek out ideas that will help inform the community about key issues. Blake said one example was a series of community forums and debates the Knight Foundation planned in conjunction with The Telegraph and Mercer University in 2008 to help inform voters about local candidates and key issues in that election.

Dennis said the foundations are seeking out innovative projects from local nonprofit agencies that may not have previously sought funding from the foundations.