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Barton County Historical Society grateful for Dorothy M. Morrison Endowed Gift

When Paul Maneth got the word about a teleconference with Katherine Opie, "it was an answer to a prayer." He was hoping for good news and he got it.

Maneth is president of the Barton County Historical Society (BCHS) Board of Directors and Opie is co-director of the Dorothy M. Morrison (DMM) Foundation.

During the teleconference, Maneth learned the DMM Foundation would establish an endowment to benefit the BCHS. Specifically, it will fund the salary, benefits and continuing education for the director position. The endowment has been established at the Golden Belt Community Foundation.

"Special thanks go to Barry Bowers, the historical society treasurer," Maneth said. "Barry brought the society to Katherine Opie's attention."

A new director has been chosen and the name will be announced later. Bev Komarek, long-time director, is retiring.

"This wonderful gift came at a really great time," Maneth commented. "The leadership position is so important because the director supervises the day-to-day operations at the museum. This includes communicating with the public, implementing programs and tending to the exhibits."

The board looked for qualities such as administrative skills; active involvement in community life; a genuine interest in the history of Barton County; a commitment to preserving that history; and fundraising.

"Since Bev Komarek has all these qualities, she was extremely difficult to replace," Maneth said. "The historical society has grown because of her; she has had the pulse of the community for many years."

Maneth is especially grateful to the DMM Foundation because smaller communities "cannot operate a historical society with only membership dues and small admission fees. You need an endowment to raise money. Private donations are the lifeblood of a non-profit entity."

Co-director Opie noted that the DMM Foundation is excited to support the BCHS because Dorothy Mae Moses Morrison was a fourth generation Barton County native.

"She valued the preservation of the region's history and admired the robust character of the settlers who developed farms and communities here," Opie said.

The Moses family moved from New York to Kansas in 1871, homesteading two miles north of Great Bend. Dorothy was born in 1912 and married Wayne Morrison in 1932. The Morrison and Moses families were involved in government, cattle and grain, banking, and oil and gas exploration.

"Acquiring and protecting the artifacts and documents that tell the story of this region fall squarely within the Foundation's mission," Opie noted. "It is of paramount importance to educate local residents, future generations and newcomers about this area's great heritage.

"The people and events that shaped Barton County inspire civic pride and a duty to continue building on the efforts of those who strived to make Barton County a great place to live, work and raise a family."

The endowment ensures the BCHS will have quality leadership and management into the future, Opie said, noting it also frees up other funding for maintenance, acquisition, preservation and additional staffing.

The DMM Foundation was established in 1993 and became fully funded when Dorothy passed away in 2009. Since then, it has been involved in the Dorothy Moses Morrison Chapel at Barton Community College; Jack Kilby Square; Camp Hope; the USD 428 Foundation; Kansas Wetlands Education Center; and the bear and bison exhibits at Great Bend Brit Spaugh Zoo.

Sandra Opie of Great Bend is co-director of the DMM Foundation.

Christy Tustin, executive director of the Golden Belt Community Foundation, expressed her appreciation for the endowed gift and noted that the BCHS is a worthy recipient.

"This endowment will help guarantee the future of the historical society. It is a wonderful community asset for all ages," Tustin said.

An endowment is a permanent fund created for the benefit of an organization. While the principal grows over time, interest earnings are available to the organization annually.

"This is a strategy that works," Tustin said. "These endowed funds increase annually to help guarantee the long life of the organizations."

Agencies with endowments do not have to apply for the money or write a grant. A distribution is automatic each year.

At \$22.5 million in total assets and more than 180 funds under management, the Golden Belt Community Foundation has been connecting people who care to causes that matter since 1996. Golden Belt Community Foundation exists to provide non-profit organizations in central Kansas with a permanent source of support and to serve as a vehicle for charitable giving for donors. GBCF serves the counties of Barton, Pawnee, Rush, and Stafford. For more information about Golden Belt Community Foundation, call (620) 792-3000 or visit their website at www.goldenbeltcf.org.