

# Nonprofit agencies challenged

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

People in metro Detroit — suburbanites and Detroiters alike — have always been generous givers.

Now the Kresge Foundation and the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan want them to be smart givers.

In a move guaranteed to get the strategic planning wheels turning, the Troy-based Kresge Foundation and Community Foundation last week announced a challenge grant program under which non-profit organizations can qualify for \$1 for every \$3 they raise, providing the money goes into an endowment.

"An endowment is a gift that is never spent," explained Alfred H. Taylor Jr., chairman of the Kresge Foundation, one of handful of executives who explained the program Thursday during a press conference in the Renaissance Center.

"But the interest an endowment

many options open

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Plans are tentative and very much in the discussion stages.

But according to their respective spokesmen, the Michigan Opera Theatre and the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn already have some good ideas about how they can benefit from the Richard Van Dusen challenge program unveiled Thursday.

"This is a departure for the Kresge Foundation," said Alfred H. Taylor, chairman of the foundation. "Previously, all of our grants have been for capital improvements . . . bricks and mortar kinds of projects."

Earlier this year, for example, the foundation gave \$50,000 to the capital improvement program of Common Cause, a crisis prevention program. In 1990, the foundation awarded \$400,000 to the Community House in Birmingham, again for capital improvements.

"Now money generated by the endowments can be used for almost any worthwhile cause," said Taylor.

THE HENRY Ford Museum, for example, might use the program to add a curator for children's programs, said Candace K. Spaulding, director of development.

"It's very speculative right now," she said. "But I'm going to make a presentation to my development committee next week. We'll have to look at our (the museum's) long-range goals and see how they would fit with the challenge grant."

Donald E. Jones, assistant director of development for the Michigan Opera Theatre, emphasized his organization — like others — has many needs, and any plans are yet to be formulated and approved.

But he said the theater could use the additional funds to supplement or expand its community outreach program — the one sponsoring mini-operas like "Cheering Up a Princess" (playing tonight in West Bloomfield) or "Let's Play Mozart" (February in Westland).

Dennis Archer, a former Michigan Supreme Court justice and frequently mentioned candidate for mayor of Detroit, said the announcement of the challenge grant program presents "a golden opportunity for organizations — and their supporters — to make a difference."

THE CHALLENGE grant program is named after Richard C. Van Dusen, a former Birmingham resident known for his legal expertise as well as his philanthropic activity.

Van Dusen, who died in June, was a principal partner in the Dickinson, Wright, Moon, Van Dusen and Freeman law firm in Detroit. He was also active in Republican politics and served as under secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the administration of Richard M. Nixon.

Van Dusen was on the board of directors for the Kresge Foundation and a member of the Wayne State University Board of Governors.

"The list is almost endless," said his widow, Barbara, referring to the organizations and foundations to which Van Dusen gave.

Mrs. Van Dusen, herself, is also involved in numerous charities and non-profit organizations, including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

generates" can be used for any number of useful purposes, he said.

The challenge grant is designed to help non-profit agencies develop a reliable financial base — an endowment — that generates revenue — the interest — enabling them to be less dependent on government funding or private contributions.

The challenge grant was not designed — or timed — to coincide with Michigan's economic downturn that has resulted in reduced state funding and some less bountiful private contributions, said Taylor.

BUT HARD times underscore the need to nurture endowments rather than spending money as it is raised, said Joseph L. Hudson Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of the Dayton Hudson Corp. and chairman of the Community Foundation for Southwestern Michigan, a partner in the endowment program.

"These are difficult times," said Hudson. "But there are no better times to point up the advantages of independent financing."

But the challenge grant is designed to change the area's mindset as well as to stimulate fund drives, according to Mariam C. Noland, president of the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan.

IT IS DESIGNED to encourage agencies to think of fund drives for permanent endowments, rather than fund drives for ad hoc projects or services, according to Taylor, Hudson and Noland.

It's a matter of changing tradition, explained Taylor. The metro area has a tradition of giving generously — as illustrated by statistics show-

ing Detroit area households give far more to charity than the national norm.

But the money was generally spent as it was raised, not put into money-generating endowments as it did in communities like Cleveland, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago.

As a result Michigan hospitals, educational organizations, museums and other non-profit agencies are dependent on the uncertain flow of government grants or private contributions.

"This is a tremendous opportunity," said Dian Wilkins, executive director of the Detroit area Chapter of

the Alzheimers Association. "It's a very positive program for the area." Wilkins is one of about 200 people from non-profit organizations, who attended a luncheon Thursday at which the challenge grant program was explained. Wilkins said she — and presumably others at the meeting — are looking at the program to see how it could help her agency.

"This is an exciting program," said Brenda L. Brown, financial development manager of the Southeastern Michigan American Red Cross Chapter. "But we must decide what to focus on . . . an existing program or something new."

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