

## Svetlana Hutfles – Community Foundations Conference

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“The power of together.” That’s a powerful phrase. It was a powerful theme for a conference in Kansas which attracted people from across the nation. This annual conference is helping build capacity of community foundations which assist Kansans and others to leave a legacy to make their communities better. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Svetlana Hutfles is Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Community Foundations. She explained that community foundations are community-based non-profit philanthropic institutions which receive funds from various donors for charitable investments in their communities.

There are currently 87 community foundation members of KACF: The Kansas Association of Community Foundations. They’re found in the state’s largest cities, communities like Manhattan, and even rural places such as Kensington, population 518, and Sylvan Grove, population 319 people. Now, that’s rural.

In 2015, KACF members held \$3.1 billion in assets and invested \$393 million in their local communities - in just one year!

Such foundations are especially important due to the pending intergenerational transfer of wealth in Kansas. “An estimated \$79 billion of estates and legacies will transfer from one generation to the next by the year 2020, according to Wichita State University research commissioned by KACF and the Kansas Health Foundation,” Svetlana said.

In response, KACF adopted an initiative called Keep 5 in Kansas. The concept is that five percent of the value of these estates could be preserved in community foundations for the benefit of those communities and their citizens. That would generate \$4 billion in community endowments to benefit Kansans in perpetuity.

“This could be a gift of grain, land, stock, life insurance, or other non-cash assets,” Svetlana said. “We encourage Kansans to think of their community as their child, as well as their family’s legacy, while working with professional advisers and estate attorneys on their legacy planning. Planned giving is important for economic and community development in Kansas,” she said.

The annual conference of Kansas community foundations is one of KACF’s initiatives designed to bolster the efforts of local community foundations in strengthening Kansas communities. “We are grateful to the Kansas Health Foundation for the key support they provided,” Svetlana said.

As the Kansas conference grew through the years, people from other states wanted to attend. The Kansas Association of Community Foundations Board decided to make it a truly national conference while continuing to host it in Kansas so as to enrich the learning experience of Kansas community foundations.

“We focused on community foundations in rural, small urban, and suburban settings and offered technical, practical, down-to-earth sessions to address challenges faced by community foundations,” Svetlana said.

One track of conference sessions is for new board members and foundation staff, while an advanced track is offered for more experienced participants. There is also a focus on emerging opportunities for community foundations.

In 2016, the well-established Kansas conference was held for the first time as a national conference for growing community foundations. Hosted in Wichita, the theme was “The Power of Together.” The conference was a resounding success, attracting 280 participants from 29 states. Wow.

“This conference has been a true testament to the Power of Together,” Svetlana said. “KACF Board, conference supporters, experts and volunteers, as well as the national advisory group, all worked together to make it a success,” she said. Participant comments included: “I learned about a cutting-edge idea and didn’t even have to drive out of state!” “I have been to many conferences...and the conference in Wichita was by far the most useful.”

“KACF’s work is all about people who care about the future of their communities,” Svetlana said. “We celebrate this during National Community Foundation Week on November 12-18, and National Philanthropy Day on November 15. I invite everyone to contact their local community foundation,” she said. “You have the power to leave a legacy in your community!”

For more information, go to [www.kansascfs.org](http://www.kansascfs.org).

“The power of together.” Just as community foundations are making a difference by helping Kansans leave a legacy, they are working together to be even more effective. We commend the leadership of the Kansas Association of Community Foundations and the other community foundation representatives who were part of this conference. I’m glad they came together in Kansas.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.