

CHADWICK BAY REGION CHAMPION COMMUNITY

Summary

OCTOBER, 2001

On September 28, 2000, USDA-Rural Development entered in to a Memorandum of Agreement with the Chadwick Bay Leaders and designated the area a Champion Community. The City of Dunkirk, Towns of Dunkirk, Hanover, Pomfret, Portland and Sheridan and Villages of Brocton, Fredonia and Silver Creek has formed a regional partnership to guide the northern Chautauqua County area into the new millennium. The Champion Community designation resulted from the Chadwick Bay region's application to the Federal Rural Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) program. The EZ/EC application involved preparing a regional and holistic strategic plan with strong citizen input and broadbased community support. The goal of the Champion Community designation is to recognize and build upon this grass roots and collaborative effort. Champion Communities are formally recognized as supported communities by USDA's Office of Community Development, which administers the rural Empowerment programs. Rural Development provides focused technical assistance and mobilizes and coordinates the participation and support of other USDA mission areas as well as other federal agencies in implementing Champion Community initiatives.

Over the past year, the Chadwick Bay Region Champion Community has updated its strategic plan and identified eight specific projects to put this plan in motion. The Champion Community program is a citizen-led initiative to create a vision for a community and then implement that vision. As such, this vision has been adopted by the Chadwick Bay Leaders: ***"To promote and enhance a comprehensive and integrated regional planning process that identifies priorities and focuses resources on those identified priorities"***. The Chadwick Bay Leaders have created a governing board, developed informal bylaws and is currently reviewing the vision for the area that was developed in the summer of 2000 through a series of community meetings. The Chadwick Bay Champion Community is indeed on their way to turning their energy into actions, making this vision a reality.

Projects within the Champion Community receive special consideration when applying for USDA Rural Development funding. The designation also allows the area to access funds specially reserved for Champion Communities. In addition, regardless of the funding source, USDA Rural Development provides extensive technical assistance to help communities pursue their goals.

Over the past year, USDA Rural Development has written four letters of support for the Chadwick Bay Region Champion Community to various federal and state agencies. These applications represent requests of over \$4.4 million. To date, \$745,933, or over 16% of the requests, has been received from these applications. USDA Rural Development has directly awarded \$148,960 from its FY2001 allocations, about one third of funds received to date.

In addition, seven Rural Housing Guaranteed (moderate income) loans were obligated for a total of \$444,500. One low-income loan was obligated for \$47,800. In January 2001, the NY USDA Rural Development State Director issued a news release announcing *"USDA NY Rural Development Earmarks \$100,000 in Home Improvement Funds for use in the Chadwick Bay Region Champion Community."* None of the earmarked funds were used.

Currently, each municipality is served by the town/village supervisor/mayor as a representative to the governing board. The governing board guides the direction of the Champion Community, builds partnerships to implement specific projects in the strategic plan, and determines which projects should receive special consideration by USDA Rural Development. Monthly meetings are currently held on the last Thursday of the month in Fredonia. For more information, contact Marge Evanek, Rural Development Specialist, (607)257-2737 X127 or email margaret.evanek@ny.usda.gov.