

NEWS RELEASE

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ESSEX COMMUNITY FOUNDATION LEADS UK NETWORK

Annual figures released by Essex Community Foundation show that it has consolidated its place as one of the UK's leading independent funders of local community action. The Chelmsford-based charitable trust saw the value of its endowment reserves increase by 25% in 2006/07, compared with the 13% growth enjoyed by the 56 members of the national body, Community Foundation Network.

Essex Community Foundation has built-up a capital fund of £8.3 million since it was established in 1996. The income from these endowed fund will be distributed, in perpetuity, to voluntary and community organisations throughout Essex, Southend and Thurrock. The Foundation is seeking to double its current capital assets by encouraging more people to give through the Community Foundation.

Speaking at the Foundation's Annual Meeting, Laura Warren DL, the Foundation's Chief Executive, said "Everything we do at the Community Foundation is focused on bringing extra support to the voluntary sector in Essex".

"We understand the funding pressures that many Essex charities face, so we act as a broker, encouraging donors to channel their funds through the Foundation so that their support can reach the local voluntary organisations that need funding".

During the 12 months to June 2007, Essex Community Foundation launched nine new funds, reflecting a national appetite for people wanting to give "something back" to their local community. Grantmaking also reached a peak with £2 million being distributed to fund 459 projects designed to combat disadvantage and strengthen communities. As well as drawing on its own investments, Essex Community Foundation has also managed government funds for distribution in the short-term to meet specific agendas, such as the Every Child Matters.

Since the independent Community Foundation first launched its grants programme in the autumn of 1996, virtually all aspects of charitable activity in Essex has been funded to benefit local people. Voluntary and community organisations working for many different causes have received grants from Essex Community Foundation totalling over £10 million.

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Patron: The Lord Lieutenant of Essex

Chief Executive: Laura Warren



Essex Community Foundation was set up in 1996 and has established a grants programme which has seen more than 2500 Essex based charities and community groups receive over £10million in grants. Funds are distributed on behalf of a wide range of donors who want their charitable giving to be accessible to local charities. www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk

Laura Warren DL, is the founding Chief Executive of Essex Community Foundation and has developed it to become one of the leading community foundations in the UK, with 9 staff, £8.3 million in endowed funds. The grant making foundation has distributed well over £10 million from funds established by local people, companies and public agencies, all keen to support voluntary and community groups in Essex. Laura was appointed to be a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex in August 2007. The Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Lord Petre said "Laura's commitment to Essex through her work at the Community Foundation has been tremendous and the growth of the Foundation is a result of her hard work and effort. Her recognition and appointment as a DL of Essex is justly deserved".

Laura had spent 25 years at Volkswagen Audi, progressing through the company to become Head of Public Affairs for Volkswagen Audi UK. Needing a "mid-life" change of direction, Laura left Volkswagen to work in the voluntary sector. To gain some knowledge and experience, she undertook some consultancy work with the National Eczema Society through the "Working for a Charity" Scheme.

Whilst completing her project with the National Eczema Society, Laura was asked by Essex businessman Ian Marks to undertake a feasibility study to explore whether there would be support for a community foundation in Essex. Although the concept was unknown, interest in the potential of pooling community assets to support charitable activity throughout the county was strong and within six months, the steering group gave the go-ahead to register the new charity.

Essex Community Foundation was launched in April 1996 and Laura was appointed Chief Executive. From one desk in an attic room, generously hosted by the Rural Community Council at Mackmurdo House in Chelmsford, and guided by a newly appointed Board of Trustees, she started to build the Foundation into the organisation it is today. Last year, in its 10th anniversary year, Essex Community Foundation won three awards:

- The Countywide Business Awards for its work in the Community
- The Essex Business Awards for being Best Business in the Community
- A Quality Accreditation from the UK Network of Community Foundations which is endorsed by the Charity Commission as meeting the hallmarks of an effective charity. The quality standards clarify how independent community foundations can help individuals, companies and other agencies achieve lasting value from channelling their charitable giving into their own communities.

For more information about Essex Community Foundation, visit www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk or contact Jo Murphy on 01245 355947

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