

News

Dutchess groups fund website to track area trends

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POUGHKEEPSIE —Trends in community well-being will be tracked for Ulster, Dutchess and Orange counties under a \$270,000 program funded during the next five years by the Dyson Center, United Way of Dutchess County, and the Community Foundation.

The project was announced Monday in a press release noting that a website designed by the Center for Government Research will be available early next year with information that tracks 50 indicators involving children and youth, community engagement, demographics, education, financial self-sufficiency, and cultural and tourism information.

“This is intended to create a repository of information and analysis,” said Center for Government Research President Kent Gardner. “It’s not just going to be numbers but each of indicators will have an analytical section to it identifying what the indicator means, what the trends have been like, and what the pitfalls are of each of these pieces of information.”

Gardner said the website will not attempt to rank counties in the same way a SUNY New Paltz report did in its Regional Well-Being report issued last month through a \$286,000 U.S. Department of Education grant covering the same three counties plus Sullivan County.

“What they were attempting to do as much as possible was come out with a unified index that they could track over time and try to trace progress,” Gardner said. “So their goal was coming up with a collection of indicators that could be summed up to an index of various categories. The profile that we’ll be developing is more a repository of information that is available to the public.”

The Center for Government Research is expected to provide statistics on total population, age of population, population by race and ethnicity, and household type with website updates of data, charts, and analysis.

“This innovative new website will provide an apples-to-apples understanding of regional trends and comparative information that has been difficult to obtain in the past because of variations in how each county reports certain types of information,” said Dyson Foundation Program Director Michell Speight.

Gardner said the website is expected to be used by researchers and grant consultants who have needed a single source for statistics.

“We would expect also that this is a place where people are going to track performance,” he said.

“If you have an initiative ... that is intended to target low birth weight babies, for example, then that would be another thing that one could do,” Gardner said. “Go to the website and track over a number of years how the community has been faring. The goal here is to try to get these communities to try to move the dial, move the needle, on these particular needs.”
