



Handy Lindsey, Jr. is the executive director of The Cameron Foundation in Petersburg. The Cameron Foundation was formed as a result of the sale of Southside Regional Medical Center in 2003. Photo courtesy of Wilson Smith.

The Cameron Foundation Who They Are, What They Do

By Wilson Smith

In just over three years The Cameron Foundation in Petersburg has given away more than \$12 million to area non-profit organizations. But just what is The Cameron Foundation and where did it get the money to give away?

“When Southside Regional Medical Center was sold, the proceeds of that sale went to creating the foundation,” says Handy Lindsey, Jr., executive director of The Cameron Foundation.

Lindsey was recruited in January 2004 to The Cameron Foundation from The Field Foundation of Illinois. The Field Foundation works to provide support for community, civic and cultural organizations in the Chicago area similar to The Cameron Foundation.

The Cameron Foundation was founded in April 2003, and in August of that year, when the

sale of SRMC was completed, the foundation took on in excess of \$150 million in assets.

Federal law requires that when a public entity is sold or dissolves that the proceeds from the sale of the public entity must be used to further benefit the community the entity served. Enter The Cameron Foundation and its purpose.

Because SRMC served as a public hospital and, now as a privately owned hospital, continues to serve southern Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Prince George and Sussex counties as well as the cities of Colonial Heights, Hopewell and Petersburg, the foundation provides funding — through grants — to non-profit agencies in those localities.

In October 2004 the foundation completed its first grant cycle. Since that time the foundation has presented grants each February, June, and October. In

the nearly three years since the first grant cycle, Lindsey estimates that the foundation has given more than \$12 million and nearly \$15 million in funding.

“Each year we spend 5 percent of the total value of our assets in grants,” Lindsey said.

Those grants fund projects and activities of non-profit agencies in one or more of seven different areas: health, human services, community or economic development, education, historical preservation, cultural enhancement, and civic affairs.

Some of those projects have included \$750,000 for the Petersburg Healthcare Alliance to construct a new building off of Wagner Road, and \$300,000 for the Stony Creek Healthcare Center expansion.

Another project Lindsey said he’s most proud of is the \$220,000 the foundation used

to fund the Virginia Local Initiatives Support Corporation Planning process in the city.

Virginia LISC has worked to develop revitalization plans for four of Petersburg’s historic, and also stressed neighborhoods. “I think it’s worked very well so far,” Lindsey said.

He added that the community has very broadly participated in the planning and the foundation may very well continue to fund Virginia LISC’s work in Petersburg.

To obtain a grant, an agency must first apply to the foundation. Lindsey said that the process then begins and a Cameron Foundation program officer will meet with representatives from the organization.

“It’s actually kind of a mix of an investigative reporting and being a bank loan officer,” Lindsey said. “The program officer’s actually go out into the community and talk to people who might be familiar with the project.”

Lindsey said that the program officers also talk with experts in the field as well as a representative from the organization applying for the grant.

The program officers then bring their findings to the grants committee and the board of trustees. The board of trustees has the final say on whether or not the organization receives a grant.

“Because the universe of non-profits in the region is relatively small, we do actually approve about 75 to 80 percent of what we see,” Lindsey said.

Lindsey said that The Cameron Foundation also sponsors classes to educate managers of non-profits on what’s needed to get grants and other technical assistance. ■