



BRIEF HISTORY

The original vision for a community organization in this area was provided by Don Bergman, a rural Osgood resident, who was a sales manager for Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. Pioneer had a keen interest in assisting rural communities grow and develop. Each year for three years, Don facilitated groups of local individuals to attend “Search for Solutions”, a three day Pioneer conference which instructed attendees in concrete approaches to facilitating the growth of rural communities. A group of local individuals began meeting regularly to discuss how the concepts learned at the Pioneer seminar could be implemented in the Marion Community. They created a non-profit organization which they named the Marion Community Development Organization (MCDO). They designated the geographic area addressed by the MCDO to be all of Marion Township, Mercer County, Ohio and all of the Marion Local School district. By August of 1990, a MCDO “Steering Committee” was announced to the community. Members of this original committee were: Marge Albers, Don Bergman, Ted Bertke, Paul Gagel, Gregg Homan, Robert Huelsman, Urban Mescher, Ron Puthoff, Roland Thobe, George Wenning, and Ken Wuebker. While the MCDO evolved over several years, a couple of documents point to 1990 as the year of its official formation.

This steering group and others brought a great deal of enthusiasm and foresight to the initiative. They developed the structure to allow the MCDO to qualify as an Ohio 501-3C non-profit organization. In October 1992, they finalized the Twenty Hundred Plan, an ambitious blueprint for community growth. It projected a significant expansion of residences and businesses in the area by the year 2000. Additionally, it anticipated that water, sewage, and natural gas line infrastructure would be in place in the same time frame.

Many of these developments have occurred in the ensuing eighteen years. There is an Industrial Park in Maria Stein; Chickasaw completed a sewage treatment plant with hook ups to all village residences in 2006, while Osgood and Maria Stein completed central sewage systems in 2012. Numerous residences have been built and new businesses are located in the community. The community has remained robust with a

The Marion Community Development Organization (MCDO)

unique identity and the ability to support a local school which is a source of great pride to all the residents.

Since its founding, the MCDO has written and submitted many successful grant applications. This endeavor has far exceeded the Twenty Hundred Plan. Grant awards to the broad community over the years total over one million dollars. These grants have provided funding for parks, and park improvements; streets, sidewalks, and lighting in the villages; and the industrial park in Maria Stein. Local businesses have been awarded grants through the efforts of the MCDO. The contributions of the MCDO have significantly increased the amenities enjoyed by the citizens of this area.

The MCDO was instrumental in the establishment of the Marion Township Recreational Park and the Marion Industrial Park. In 2014 the MCDO played a key role in the expansion of the Industrial Park. 22.7 acres were purchased from Pat and Nancy Nieberding, subdivided into 10 lots and sold to local businesses. The MCDO borrowed the money for purchase and served as the selling agent for the lots. The MCDO contributed all excess revenue from the lot sales to the reduction of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) loan which paid for the park infrastructure.

While not all of the original goals of the organizers have been reached, other important ones have been. Their foresight in starting the organization was profound. The MCDO continues to apply for and receive grant money. It serves as the umbrella organization for a number of groups; Chapel Hill preschool, Ag Ed Boosters, Marion Local FFA, Ag Solutions, the Industrial Park Association, 301 Club, and baseball, softball, and soccer at the Marion Township Park. The MCDO's monthly meeting minutes and quarterly newsletters provide local news and updates on the projects it is pursuing. The quarterly newsletter is sent free of charge to over 1,400 residences. The MCDO's impact has been and continues to be considerable in the Marion Community.