

Caesars Foundation of Floyd County hands out \$1.6 million in grants

By **CHRIS MORRIS**

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— ELIZABETH — Telling a story that is 400 million years old is something the Falls of the Ohio Foundation doesn't take lightly. Thanks to a \$150,000 grant from the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County, the job will get a little easier.

The Falls Foundation was one of seven nonprofits or educational institutions to receive major grants totaling \$1.6 million Thursday afternoon at Caesars Indiana.

Falls of the Ohio Foundation Executive Director Dana Cummins said the money will be used to purchase new permanent exhibits to replace the old ones, which are 14 years old. The Falls Foundation is in the middle of a capital campaign to not only replace the exhibits, but expand the building as well.

"We want the next exhibits to be more hands-on," Cummins said. "The exhibits tell the story and the history of the Falls."

Besides the Falls of the Ohio, others to receive grants from the Caesars Foundation Thursday were: Rauch Inc., \$150,000, to fund an autism resource center; Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation, \$200,000, to restore the Ritter home along Oak Street in New Albany; Guerin Inc., \$200,000, to be used for the construction of two residences for the elderly; St. Mary's Catholic Church in New Albany, \$200,000, for the restoration of the historic steeple; New Albany-Floyd County Education Foundation, \$300,000, to help pay for full-day kindergarten; and Bridgepointe Services and Goodwill, \$400,000, to help construct a community campus at the Clarksville facility.

Since the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County was established in 1999, only seven previous major grants have been awarded.

"This year, we took the approach that we would like to help a lot of people with a substantial amount instead of just one," said Floyd County Commissioner Mark Seabrook, who is president of the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County. "We think we did a pretty good job."

Neil Walkoff, assistant general manager at Caesars, said "this is a very important day for Floyd County, New Albany and Caesars Indiana."

"I can't be more proud of the Caesars Foundation for what they have done for New Albany and Floyd County," he said.

Dennis Brooks, superintendent for the New Albany-Floyd County Consolidated School Corp., said the \$300,000 gift will be well spent. The money will supplement state funds for full-day kindergarten.

Brooks said the state is supposed to increase its funding in 2009, and Thursday's gift will help get the corporation through the next two years. He said full-day kindergarten cost the school corporation around \$400,000 a year.

The NA-FC Foundation has raised approximately \$1.3 million, he said. Besides helping fund full-day kindergarten, donations to the foundation help fund Junior Achievement, technology advances and scholarships for teachers.

"We couldn't offer what we do without it (NA-FC Foundation)," Brooks said. "This money will really help insure a second year of full-day kindergarten."

The money the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation received will help secure the completion of the interior of the landmark, which will be used to house charitable-service providers.

David Hock, with the Ritter Foundation, said the money also will "go a long way in putting a wing in the back of the home."

"We would like to do it as soon as possible," Hock said of interior restoration work.

Jim Emery with St. Mary's said structural engineers have said it will cost around \$400,000 to refurbish the church's steeple, which was added to the church in 1865. The church got half of that total Thursday. Earlier this month, the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County awarded nearly \$370,000 in the biannual grant cycle. The maximum level of funding in the two annual cycles is \$25,000 per organization. According to a news release from Caesars Foundation Executive Director Jerry Finn, major grants are not given annually and are for projects which have significant impact. Other previous grants have gone to the Division Street School, Ohio River Greenway project, IU Southeast library and the Scribner Place-YMCA project.

Charity Cash

The following grants were announced Thursday by the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County:

- Falls of the Ohio Foundation, \$150,000 — to be used for the redesign and planning to replace 14-year-old exhibits at the Interpretive Center.
- Rauch Inc., \$150,000 — to fund an autism resource center for families, professionals, school staffs and the community in a joint partnership with Bridgepointe Goodwill.
- Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation, \$200,000 — to complete the interior renovation of the birthplace of Indiana's only Catholic Cardinal.
- Guerin Inc., \$200,000 — for the construction of two self-contained residences to provide housing opportunities for the elderly.
- St. Mary's Catholic Church, \$200,000 — for the restoration of the historic steeple, which was added to the church in 1865.
- NA-FC Education Foundation, \$300,000 — to help provide full-day kindergarten to approximately 850 children each year.
- Bridgepointe Services and Goodwill, \$400,000 — to help fund the construction of a community center that will house a social service campus as well as several nonprofit organizations.

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Photos



Angie Stokes, right, joins representatives from St. Mary's Church in New Albany as they accept a check for \$200,000 from the Caesar's Foundation. The money will be used to repair the steeple at the church. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen



The steeple at St. Mary's Catholic Church in New Albany will be repaired with help from money from the Caesar's Foundation. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen



The efforts to restore the Cardinal Ritter House in New Albany received a boost Thursday morning when it was awarded \$200,000 from the Caesar's Foundation. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen