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Group offers resource to help keep estates' donations in Montana

By JOHN HARRINGTON
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With one of the country's oldest populations, Montana figures to be at the forefront of the coming transfer of wealth from baby boomers down to future generations.

The Big Sky Institute for the Advancement of Nonprofits hopes to see a chunk of those estates stay in the state, in the form of gifts to local charitable foundations scat-

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Local

The Big Sky Institute for the Advancement of Nonprofits hopes its newly published guide to community foundations across the state will help estate planners and other financial professionals work with their clients to leave their legacies at home.

Donations

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tered across Montana. The institute this week is releasing its 2008 Guide to Supporting Montana's Local and County Community Foundations, a resource for financial planners, accountants, wealth managers and anyone who might be interested in leaving their legacy to nonprofit causes in the Treasure State.

The guide is the institute's first effort at compiling basic information about local, county and multi-county foundations and funds dedicated to serving Montana's communities.

Mike Schechtman, the institute's director, said that some \$9 billion will pass out of the estates of Montana residents in the next decade.

"Montana has a narrow and fleeting opportunity to capitalize on the greatest intergenerational transfer of wealth in our nation's history," he said.

The guide, free to any professional financial planner, provides basic information on some 80 community foundations across the state, including the Lewis and Clark County Community Foundation and the Lincoln Valley Community Foundation.

It includes basic contact and fiscal information, including how many grants a foundation typically makes and what types of activities it supports.

Schechtman said that beyond helping Montanans plan to leave their money in local hands, he hopes the guide will help attract the attention of larger, national foundations. Montana and several other rural states continue to be underserved by the largest national charitable groups, he said, and the guide might open some eyes.

"How do we tell the national foundations that there's great work going on in this state?" he said. "How do we package it and tell their story?"

Janine Lee of the Atlanta-based Southern Partners Fund, in town this week to consult with the Big Sky Institute's Montana Nonprofit Connections program, said the contributions of people in rural states are not being adequately recognized.

"Rural America has not gotten the investment in grant-making that's reflective of their financial contributions," she said. "The question is, 'How does Montana raise its profile to be in a position to raise more national dollars?'"

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