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COMMUNITY HEART & SOUL COMES TO BUCKSPORT  
ALL RESIDENTS ENCOURAGED TO HELP SHAPE FUTURE

[Bucksport, ME] (January 9, 2016)—A group of residents here has started to lay the groundwork for a citizen-led effort to shape community and economic development and create a roadmap for the future using a method called Community Heart & Soul. The project kicked off Saturday, when a group of nineteen residents joined a day-long workshop at Bucksport High School.

A second meeting is scheduled for 6-8 p.m. on January 20 at the Jewett School conference room. All residents are encouraged to participate. Refreshments will be served.

Community Heart and Soul is a resident driven approach to community development and planning. It was developed by the Vermont-based Orton Foundation, and endeavors to increase participation in local decision-making. Residents are invited to help shape the future of their communities, based upon what matters most to them. Other Heart & Soul communities have seen the process build leadership, boost volunteerism, bridge divides, create partnerships, preserve historical sites, increase resources for k-12 education and strengthen economies.

“This approach increases participation in local decision-making and reminds residents they have the power to shape the future of their communities in a way that upholds the unique character of each place,” said Rich Rotella, Community and Economic Developer in Bucksport and project coordinator of the Heart & Soul effort.

More than a dozen towns in Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Montana, Maine, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island and Vermont have worked with Orton Family Foundation on Community

Heart & Soul projects. Towns in Maine that have completed projects are Gardiner, Biddeford and Damariscotta.

The Saturday initial workshop brought community members together, introducing them to Phase One (Lay the Groundwork) of the four-phase method. This included getting organized, creating a work plan, and spreading the word. The session was led by Jane Lafleur from Friends of Midcoast Maine, who is facilitating the project with the Orton Family Foundation.

With support from the Bucksport Town Council, RSU 25, area social agencies, and regional foundations, the Heart & Soul Team is welcoming more citizens to bring their enthusiasm and skills to the two-year effort.

“We encourage everyone in Bucksport to come learn more about Community Heart & Soul and to get involved,” Rotella said.

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