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Austin Family Foundation, OCF partner on unique philanthropic effort

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Ken Austin has been one of Oregon's most generous philanthropists, with a tradition of giving dating back 30 years.

On Monday, Austin — who co-founded dental equipment manufacturer A-dec Inc. in Newberg in 1964 with his late wife, Joan — and the Oregon Community Foundation will unveil the results of a Yamhill County needs assessment that will provide structure and focus to the family's giving through the Austin Family Foundation, launched in 2015.

The 76-page needs assessment is the first of its kind and focused on five core areas: demographics, the economy and employment, education and training, health and human services, and arts and culture.

"In the estate planning, we realized there would be a much larger opportunity to participate in philanthropy," by formalizing our giving, said Austin. "In the '80s, we were just a small family foundation with only \$300,000 to start with. This will be much larger. It's substantial."

The needs assessment will provide a roadmap that will help guide the Austin Family Foundation's giving.

"We did a survey of existing literature," said Brett Baker, president of Austin Industries. "Then we did 40 to 50 interviews with community leaders, elected leaders, the superintendent of the of school district, the head of Habitat for humanity and others to build a picture of where the gaps are in the community. That paired with the family's mission and vision work gives us a real focus for the foundation."

The needs assessment was paid for by the Austin Family Foundation and will be shared with Yamhill County community members. It was conducted by OCF, Oregon's largest foundation, which will continue to guide the family as it selects where to focus its multi-year grants.

"We have developed a trust relationship with the family," said OCF CEO Max Williams, who added that OCF has worked with the Austin family for 17 years. "We're providing a set of services to them that they would otherwise have had to figure out how to obtain."

OCF is providing similar services to other families through its Family Giving Center, which will make its formal debut 2018.

"When some families get to this level of giving, the pressure to make smart decisions can be a little overwhelming," Williams said. "We work with families on a case-by-case basis at whatever level a family needs."

The Austin Family Foundation is expected to grow significantly in the coming years and will include proceeds from the sale of part of the Springbrook property, 261-acres located just north of downtown Newberg.

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