

LIBERTY GATHERING PLACE

4th Congressional District

A historic small-town café, nearly out of business due to fire and flood damage, has improved operations and expanded capacity thanks to a unique public private partnership and business arrangement. Liberty Gathering Place is now preparing meals for loyal locals, tourists and community organizations as well as 1,000 senior and youth participants in the Senior Nutrition Service and Summer Youth Food programs of the Tri-County Community Action Commission (CAC).

In a unique business arrangement, Tri-County CAC purchased the struggling café from the previous owner and now rents it back to her. As a result, this project benefits everyone involved: the Tri-County CAC now has a centrally located, consolidated kitchen facility to more efficiently serve Meals on Wheels and youth participants in Champaign, Logan and Shelby counties; the former café owner and 11 employees retain their livelihood; and West Liberty residents and tourists continue to enjoy the café's home-cooked sandwiches, fresh sides and fruit cobblers.

"This community landmark building was in great need of renovation including all new electrical systems, HVAC, range hood and more," said Denise Birt, Tri-County CAC executive director. "To help cover these costs we looked to Finance Fund."

Finance Fund provided a \$20,000 predevelopment grant to cover architectural, engineering and permit costs, and then applied its Linked Deposit Program to reduce the mortgage interest rate, saving more than \$15,000 over the life of the loan.

"The greatest challenge was funding, but somehow we identified enough funds to complete the renovation," Birt said. "We truly consider the Liberty Gathering Place restaurant project as one of our agency's best practices, and we will continue to look for more partnership opportunities with Finance Fund in our organization's future."



FINANCE FUND INVESTMENT IMPACT:

- A \$20,000 predevelopment grant for the restoration and renovation of a historic landmark building that serves the tri-county area
- Linked Deposit Program support to reduce mortgage interest and save \$15,000 over the life of the loan
- Support for the retention of 11 restaurant jobs



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