

Community Welcomes S. H. Cowell Foundation

On Thursday, February 17th, more than 110 people packed Esparto's Scout Cabin to greet officers from a private foundation and encourage their investment in the Capay Valley Region. Community members and local groups from Madison to Rumsey, along with representatives from public and private agencies providing services in the area, shared ideas for needed community improvements.

The site visit, co-sponsored by Capay Valley Vision, Esparto Unified School District, and RISE, Inc., introduced the S. H. Cowell Foundation to our communities, conveying the enormous energy and will to work together. During a morning tour, foundation officers had the opportunity to talk with farmers and farmworkers; students, teachers and officials in the public schools; parents and children at the Universal Early Learning Center; and members of the local general plan advisory committees. Among the afternoon town hall participants were newly elected Fifth District Supervisor Duane Chamberlain and his Deputy Supervisor Patricia Valenzuela.

The Cowell Foundation is a San Francisco-based private foundation established in 1956 to improve the quality of life of children and families living in poverty in Northern California. In deciding where to make grants, they look for towns or neighborhoods where residents, public and private service providers, educators, and civic leaders are working together to improve the quality of life of low-income children and families.

Topics of discussion at the town hall meeting were Family Resource Centers, Affordable Housing, K-12 Public Education, and Youth Development—the four areas in which Cowell Foundation makes grants and investments. Many ideas were shared as to the needs and assets of our community. Fortunately, many groups have been working in partnership to fulfill the needs of our community using many diverse resources. Regardless of whether or not the Cowell Foundation decides to become involved in this community, these conversations are continuous as we work towards solutions. Updates will be posted in future issues of the *Valley Voice*.