**Stories of Outsized Impact featuring Marty Fluharty (4:32)**

Okay, I’m Marty Fluharty with the Americana Foundation, been there 22 years, and I fortunately have a board that is willing to take a risk now and then. I spent several years working for the state of Michigan and so I knew the state pretty well. A group of friends of mine in Northwest Michigan came to me and said, “Look, we have a project in mind; something we’d really like to do that we feel is very important for our region. And we’re working with the Park Service. Would you come look at our project?”

The project was a proposal for a 27-mile trail, paved trail, for bikers and hikers in Northwest Michigan—a very, very popular tourist area. Bikers and hikers would walk along a narrow country road, Route 22, and were in danger of cars loaded with tourists on the same road. I went up there, up to Northwest Michigan and took a look at what they were proposing, a not-for-profit and the Park Service, who happened to be good friends (so keep those good friends, wherever they are). We walked parts of the trail, we did drive part of it, 27-miles worth of it, and I got poison ivy, but it was well worth it. They said, “We need the money to do the actual engineering. We have one donor who has come up with part of the money, 10 thousand dollars. Can Americana come up with more? With the rest of it just to do the planning.”

I said, “Well I’ll talk to my board,” and I did, because the board is familiar with the area first of all, and second, with the group that we had been founding, the not-for-profit Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear. They said, “Well what do you think?” and I said “Well I think it’s a good project that’ll help this whole state. So are you willing to take a risk that this thing is gonna go through?”

Well we funded it; they did the planning, mapped the route, and then started raising the money. They got federal dollars from our senator San Levin and got other federal dollars, got money from the Park Service, raised money locally, and now, 2/3’s of that 27-mile trail has been built. Multimillion dollar project—48 million dollars—but it’s because Americana, a small foundation, family foundation, has a board that realizes that projects need to start somewhere, and sometimes they’re risky, sometimes they don’t work. But it’s getting to know who’s going to do it, who they are, what their organization is, and do they have the passion to really make this happen. And when you put those together and the answers are “Yes”, you can do incredible things with a little bit of money. Our 12,500-dollar grant meant that our people, now and in the future, will have a safe place to bike, and hike, in a gorgeous national park.