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SCEDD News

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Nebraska Community Improvement Project

Since 1963, the Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) has recognized Nebraska communities annually for their improvement efforts completed each year, with an emphasis on the achievements of grassroots volunteers. Communities that have participated in the NCIP process have experienced many positive benefits as a result. Some benefits of participation in NCIP include: community volunteers are awarded and recognized for their efforts, stronger leadership and increased community wide involvement, increased community pride and sense of identity, better communication between government, local organizations and citizens, positive publicity for communities. Communities identify and build on their strengths, market community image as an award winning community, and specialized training and technical assistance to enhance community volunteer's ability to accomplish community improvement and economic development goals.

Through the dedicated work of volunteers, thousands of development projects are completed throughout Nebraska each year. Community volunteers have proven that there are three components to community success. These are: 1.) A community planning process that encourages citizen participation, 2.) A volunteer and leadership development process that involves recruitment, training and recognition strategies for local volunteers and leaders, and 3.) Documented community and economic development accomplishments that have resulted from incorporating a planning and leadership development process with an emphasis on grassroots volunteer efforts in the community.

Throughout SCEDD, participating NCIP communities continue to show signs of success. Ravenna, a 23-year NCIP participating community, was named best in population class during the 2006 program year. However, the benefits of participating do not simply stop at the award – the community has completed a number of projects thanks to the countless hours of planning and implementation by many volunteers. This year alone, a community park was updated, the local caboos was relocated, signage was installed at many community landmarks and hotspots, and backpacks were stuffed with school supplies for those less fortunate. In Blue Hill, the awards continue to roll in as the community received second place in its population class. The Blue Hill Improvement Committee works with the community club and local organizations to identify all the area organizations, committees, and volunteers to help the community work together. Volunteers helped to create a modern, state-of-the art fitness center in the community, helped coordinate the community's 4th of July festival, and held a Fashion Wear Extravaganza to help raise funds for the fitness center. To show the community just how important the volunteers are to development efforts, the community club sold volunteer Valentines to help recognize all the tremendous volunteers in the community. In the past several years, the energy of the volunteers has helped to reopen the grocery store, start a new café, and encouraged several people to make Blue Hill the place where they will call home.

Other NCIP communities in the SCEDD region include: Aurora, Franklin, and Guide Rock. In 2006, there were 59 NCIP participating communities from across the state. For more information on NCIP contact Lindsay Papenhausen, NCIP Coordinator at 800-426-6505 or 402-471-6587 or email lindsay.papenhausen@ded.ne.gov or visit <http://crd.neded.org/ncip>



Linda Fettig, Rural Development Commission, and Karen Kollars of Nebraska Tourism

Central Nebraska Development Network to Host Rural Institute 2007

The Central Nebraska Development Network has been revived and is hard at work planning the 2007 Rural Institute. Representatives from USDA Rural Development, Rural Development Commission, South Platte United Chamber of Commerce, NE Dept of Economic Development, SCEDD, Central Community College, NPPD, Trailblazer RC&D, South Central RC&D, and numerous other organizations are working together with the Partnership for Rural Nebraska to bring the Rural Institute to South Central Nebraska. The proposed dates are September 17-19, 2007, and the proposed site is Holdrege. Watch for more details and reserve the dates to attend this important event!



Rick Nelsen, NPPD

Rural Nebraska Funding Opportunities Explored at January Workshop

People interested in learning about ways to fund projects in rural Nebraska may want to register for a January 9 workshop. January 3 is the registration deadline for the workshop, to be held from 2-5 p.m. CST. The free workshop will feature:

- Building Entrepreneurial Communities grant application information (the next grant deadline is February 9).
- Nebraska Advantage program information (as it relates to rural and micro enterprise businesses).
- Nebraska Community Capital Fund, New Markets Tax Credits, and New Markets Tax Credits Business Loans information.

The workshop will be telecast to the following locations:

- Ainsworth—Public Library
- Beatrice—Beatrice State Development Center
- Chadron—Chadron State College
- Columbus—Public Library
- Hastings—Public Library
- Kearney—Public Library
- Lincoln—Nebraska Educational Telecommunications
- Norfolk—Northeast Community College
- North Platte—Educational Service Unit #16
- Omaha—State Office Building
- O'Neill—Avera St. Anthony's Hospital
- Scottsbluff—UNL Panhandle Research & Extension Center
- Wayne—Wayne State College

The workshops are sponsored and led by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Nebraska Rural Development Commission. To register, or receive more information, e-mail Sandi Kaskie at sandra.kaskie@ded.ne.gov

EDGE Classes Begin January 9

EDGE Classes will begin January 9, 2007, in Aurora and Holdrege. Hamilton Strategic EDGE Coalition, based in Aurora with the Aurora Area Chamber and Development as their lead agent, and PK EDGE, a partnership of Phelps and Kearney Counties, with Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce as the lead agent, will both be offering the Entrepreneur class this winter. This is a comprehensive course designed to assist potential and existing business owners in increasing management skills that lead to new, expanding and profitable businesses. Participants of the 12-session course will develop a comprehensive business plan that covers business concerns such as operational issues, financials, marketing techniques and more.

This is a great accomplishment for SCEDD and the communities involved! For more information regarding getting an EDGE Coalition started in your area or to participate in the Entrepreneur Course contact Sharon Hueffle at sharonh@scedd.us or 308-995-3190.

The South Central Economic Development District exists to develop and promote a positive economic climate, which supports regional growth.

**Enhancing
Developing
Growing
Entrepreneurs**

News from the District

Market Place: Opening Doors to Success – February 28, 2006

Article taken from South Central Nebraska RC and D Newsletter December 2006



The Center for Rural Affairs invests in small business development through their Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP). To continue and enhance that work and create more opportunities for small business growth, a one-day event, “Marketplace: Opening Doors to Success,” will be held on Wednesday, February 28, 2007 at the Ramada Inn in Kearney.

This conference will offer training, networking, and professional development opportunities for startup and existing small businesses, service providers, rural communities, and family farmers and ranchers. The Marketplace consists of three parts:

1. Networks and Information—successful entrepreneurs and service providers are available in one location for entrepreneurs to meet with for information gathering.
2. Educational Tracks—Some of the 30-40 training opportunities include Financing, Marketing, Tax/Legal Considerations, Agricultural Entrepreneurship, Community Development, Rural Policy Issues, and Youth Entrepreneurship.
3. Entrepreneurial Communities—Training specifically for communities to help them increase their capacity to become an “*entrepreneurial community*.”

For more information, contact Kathie Starkweather at kathies@cfra.org; 402-687-2103 x1014, or Monica Braun at mbraun@alltel.net, 402-643-2673. The registration for the entire conference, including lunch and refreshments, is \$25/person. To register or to learn more about Marketplace, visit the Web site at www.cfra.org/marketplace.htm.

Hamptonites Dream about Towns’ Future

Article taken from the Aurora News Register, October 31, 2006, written by R.L. Furse



Milan Wall discusses goals

Hampton citizens’ dreams for the future of their community could turn to reality if they follow through with suggestions made at a town hall meeting October 24, 2006. The Hampton Development Corporation and the South Central Economic Development district invited citizens to join in a plan that would set priorities for the community’s future. Assisting HDC was Milan Wall from the Heartland Center for Leadership. The center facilitated a process called “Imagining Hampton’s Future” that encouraged attendees to look at Hampton’s past successes and use the lessons learned from the successes to propel their community into the future.

Participants were led through a process of discovering Hampton’s achievements, dreaming of future possibilities, designing future priority goals for community improvement and eventually were asked to decide how to deliver the results through organized task forces. At the close of the meeting those in attendance were then instructed to meet again in a few weeks as smaller task force committees to discuss the specific aspects of future planning.

Top priorities and task forces established in Hampton consist of Community Development including West B Development, staffing, roads; Business Development including Main Street, Highway 34, grocery store; Growing Hampton including schools, young families, housing; and Auditorium Improvements.



Local patrons enjoy lively discussion



Active participation from locals



Linda Black & Pat Compton of DED

News from the District



Sharon Hueftle presents results

Community Needs Assessment Surveys

For ten years Kay Payne provided valuable needs assessments for Nebraska communities, so when Kay retired as director of the Center for Rural Research and Development (CRRD) at UNK in June of 2006, she left a large gap in services. South Central Economic Development District noted this gap and determined to fill it. SCEDD's Executive Director, Sharon Hueftle, partnered with Kay Payne to learn the ropes of Community Needs Assessment Surveys. Their first joint project was an assessment for Alda.

During the summer of 2006, members of the Alda Village Board had contacted CRRD about conducting a community needs assessment survey in Alda. Their primary concern was gathering public input regarding their water quality issue. Retired CRRD Director Kay Payne, Sharon Hueftle with South Central Economic Development District, and members of the Alda Village Board met to discuss the surveying process and compile questions appropriate to Alda's needs. It was agreed that members of the Village board would be responsible for the delivery and pick-up process. The Village provided a listing of all households to be surveyed within the city limits of Alda.

The questionnaire was divided into five areas of interest including: 1) Community, 2) Business and Economic Development, 3) Day Care, 4) Housing, and 5) Demographics. The questionnaires were hand-delivered and picked up by adult volunteers to all residences within Alda's city limits. The response rate for the questionnaires was excellent.

A report was prepared conveying the results of the surveys in text and graphics including strengths and challenges for the community in each of the five areas. These results were then shared with the community via a public meeting in Alda.

Communities interested in a Community Needs Assessment Survey should contact SCEDD at sharonh@scedd.us or 308-995-3190.

SCEDD Organizational Meeting to be held in Red Cloud January 25

The January Board of Directors meeting of the South Central Economic Development District will be held in the north room of the ***This Is It*** Restaurant, 330 N Webster St, Red Cloud, Thursday, January 25, 2007. Optional supper will be at 5:30 PM with the meeting to begin at 6:30. Election of officers and 2007 budget approval will be on the agenda.

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