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

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Funk Town Hall Meeting

Twenty-eight community patrons spent the evening of Thursday, April 2, planning for the future of Funk. Sharon Hueftle of the South Central Economic Development District and Linda Black of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development facilitated the Appreciative Inquiry process during the Town Hall which was sponsored by the Phelps County Economic Development Corporation and the Village of Funk. Supper was provided by Glenwood Telephone.

The Appreciative Inquiry process begins with looking at past successes in the community and using the lessons learned from these successes to propel the community into the future. The process leads participants through developing priorities, implementing plans, building consensus and collaboration and increasing visibility of community projects.

After recalling past successes and discussing the lessons learned from these successes, community members were then asked to dream of a preferred future for Funk, 10 to 15 years into the future. When asked to bring these long term visions to what could be accomplished in one to three years, the following ideas were presented: designing a future for the school, paving Lion's Drive, redoing sidewalks, more Christmas decorations, a community newsletter, an improved café, a new street, a fence around the sewer, flags down main street, cleaning up homes, decorating the elevator, recruiting small businesses to main street and school, 125th Celebration, and a Music Festival.

The Town Hall meeting ended with patrons choosing three projects as top priorities, and then forming task forces to begin immediate action on those projects. The task forces formed were: 125th Celebration & Festivals, Future of the School/Gym, and Clean-up/Maintain/Decorate the Community. These task forces will meet regularly to carry out their goals for community improvement.

If your community would like to hold a Town Hall meeting to assist with community strategic planning, please contact the SCEDD Office.



Brainstorming at the Funk Town Hall.

Regional Revitalization through Community Development



The South Central Economic Development District and the Nebraska Development Network – Central Region are partnering to bring community development workshops to rural communities! Collaborating and partnering within regions to connect resources and local entities for community and economic development fulfills the Network's vision of being a source of expertise for enhancing those opportunities in Central Nebraska.

SCEDD is seeking communities who are interested in hosting an RRCD/Economic Development Summit. If your community or organization is interested, contact SCEDD by email at sharonh@scedd.us or by phone at 308-995-3190. Topics of workshops will be tailored to the needs of the communities in the region where the workshop will be held, so let us know about any specific topics or issues that you would like addressed. We will bring the speakers to you!

Economic Development Training

Two SCEDD staff members graduated from economic development courses this spring. Sharon Hueftle completed her third course and graduated from the Economic Development Institute, offered by the University of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City, providing a broad spectrum of advanced education in the field of economic development. Melissa Vinzant graduated from the Heartland Economic Development Course, a basic training course offered in Blue Springs, Missouri, by the University of Northern Iowa.

Superior RRCD Successful

SCEDD co-hosted a well-attended RRCD/Economic Development Summit in Superior on May 4th, at the 4th Street Junction. Chris Anderson, City Administrator for Central City, discussed rural housing issues and the available programs, providing examples of projects undertaken in Central City to demonstrate the successfulness of the programs. Mark Scott with Outright Solutions discussed the opportunities available to business owners seeking to transition their businesses in the future, and Pat Compton from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development presented on different housing programs available through DED. The Summit brought in 30 attendants, and feedback from the event was positive.

Nebraska Tourism Launches Byways Geopicting Contest

If you've traversed the back roads of Nebraska and snapped some photos along the way, or if you're planning a trip this summer and want to put your camera to good use, Nebraska Tourism has the contest for you.

The Department of Economic Development's Tourism Division launched a new Byways geopicting contest that invites travelers to snap a picture along one of Nebraska's nine scenic byways, record the GPS coordinates from the spot where they captured the image and submit the photo at www.visitnebraska.gov. Entrants can win a prize valued at \$250, and be entered into a grand prize drawing for a laptop computer valued at \$1,000. The year-long contest is a fun way for Nebraskans and tourists both to share their experiences of traveling Nebraska's Byways.

All submitted geopics are eligible to receive votes through online balloting at visitnebraska.gov. Each quarter, the photographer with the most votes will select one of the following prizes: a \$250 gift card to Cabela's, a \$250 gift card to Rockbrook Camera, \$250 in Nebraska Lottery scratch tickets (must be 19 years old to play) or a digital photo frame valued at \$250. The four finalists will be entered into the grand prize competition, a laptop computer valued at \$1,000.

To enter images into the Nebraska's Byways geopicting contest, visit www.VisitNebraska.gov and click on the "Geopicting Photo Contest" graphic. While you're there, you can also order or download your free *2009 Nebraska Travel Guide* and start planning your Nebraska vacation today.

News from the District

Watchable Wildlife/Nature Tourism Workshop

The South Platte United Chambers of Commerce hosted a Wildlife/Nature Tourism Workshop at the Alma Country Club on May 1st. This all day workshop helped participants realize the economic potential of nature-related recreation while conserving native plants and animals in their natural habitats. This was an opportunity to partner with like-minded people to build world class wildlife tourism in the South Platte region of Nebraska. The workshop, entitled “Developing a Sustainable Community through Wildlife/Nature Tourism,” was sponsored by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and hosted by the SPUCC tourism committee. SCEDD is a member of SPUCC, and on the tourism committee.



Chairman of the SPUCC Tourism Committee Don Brockmeier of Eustis welcomes the group assembled to hear Jim Mallman of Watchable Wildlife at the Alma Country Club.



A diverse crowd attended the Watchable Wildlife workshop.

New Addition to SCEDD Staff

The South Central Economic Development District staff is growing by leaps and bounds! We are proud to welcome our newest member, Kathy Burr. Kathy, who joined SCEDD in May, will provide much needed office support on a part-time basis. When she is not busy assisting SCEDD, Kathy spends her time with her family, attending sporting and school events. Kathy and her husband Chuck have four children; their oldest daughter Emily is in her Junior year at UNL, Erica just graduated from Holdrege High School and will be headed to Chadron State College in the fall, and the younger children both attend school in Holdrege, where Joseph is a Sophomore and Juliana is in 8th grade. Thanks to Kathy, for penciling SCEDD into her busy schedule!



In order to keep up with the increase in staff, the SCEDD office has moved into the Holdrege City Building at 502 East Avenue. A big thank you to the City of Holdrege for providing this space and to Wayne Bell and ESU 11 for donating office furniture!

Nebraska Receives Positive Notice Nationwide

Taken from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development April 7, 2009 newsletter.

Nebraska Called “Happiest Place in Nation”

ABC’s *Good Morning America* featured Nebraska as the “Happiest Place in the Nation”, according to Mainstreet.com’s first ever *Happiness Index* ranking.

The *Happiness Index* is all about which states are best weathering the current economic storm. The Happiness Index looks at household income, debt, employment and foreclosures. Nebraska ranked 2nd overall in lowest number of foreclosures, 2nd in lowest unemployment rates, and 5th in lowest percentage of non-mortgage debt by income.

Mainstreet.com says we all know that money alone can’t buy happiness, but having a job, home and enough money to cover your basic budgetary needs is a good start. Contrary to popular wisdom that densely populated urban areas of the country have ‘recession-proof’ housing markets and boast impressively high average salary ranges, The Happiness Index suggests that the Midwest is the main source of financial happiness. After Nebraska in the top spot, Iowa and Kansas came in at 2 and 3 on the on the list. To view the ranking online, visit:

<http://www.mainstreet.com/>.

BECA Grant Awarded to SCEDD Communities

The Village of Chapman and City of Central City were awarded \$15,681.75 to train Merrick County residents in entrepreneurial, and workplace and life planning skills. The training also will encompass the promotion of tourism, and historical and artistic activities. Merrick Foundation, Inc. will provide financial support for this project.

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and Nebraska Rural Development Commission annually award grant funding through the Building Entrepreneurial Communities Act (BECA), which supports regional economic and community development partnerships in rural areas of the state.

**South Central
Economic
Development
District**

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 11-13 Turkey Days, Oxford (dawnquinn@swnebr.net for more info)
- June 15 **Phelps-Kearney Partnership Inventors, Investors, & Entrepreneurs Club**
6:00 p.m., Holdrege
- June 17 **Nebraska Development Network- Central Region**
10:00 – 2:00, Giltner
- June 27-30 Bertrand Days Fair & Rodeo, Bertrand (bertra@atcjet.net for more info)
- July 20 **Phelps-Kearney Partnership Inventors, Investors, & Entrepreneurs Club**
6:00 p.m., Minden
- October **RRCD workshop** (*location tbd*)

Contact SCEDD at admin@scedd.us to have your local events published in our newsletter!