



NCRPC NEWS

North Central Regional
Planning Commission

www.ncrpc.org
February 2006

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Happy New Year

The new year is already well underway and there were so many items of interest to include for this first newsletter of the year that pages were added. As always, your comments or suggestions are welcome. Please contact us at the office or e-mail lthielen@nckcn.com. Best wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2006.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, February 23, 2 p.m.
Board Work/Study Session:
Emergency Preparedness
Planning: Role of Elected Officials

NCKCN AWARDS GRANT TO COLLEGE TO DEVELOP OFF-CAMPUS LEARNING

North Central Kansas Community Network Co. (NCKCN) has awarded North Central Kansas Technical College (NCKTC) in Beloit a \$26,117 grant to develop regional off-campus learning opportunities.

Students in the region who are unable to attend full-time classes at the college will benefit from the new technology. Courses are being developed and will be offered via voice-video connections to unified school districts that have comparable equipment. NCKTC plans to have a full line of courses available by Fall 2006.

This same equipment will enable NCKTC to develop capacity to support area entrepreneurs through the delivery of educational business services.

The college initiated the program at the beginning of the year and already has 16 off-campus "students" in neighboring counties partici-

pating via the Internet, joining 22 participants already on campus.

Plans are to augment services by tying into additional business educational offerings of four-year colleges and universities.

Increased access to entrepreneurial education will benefit the region.

"Business owners and those seeking to become business owners need a support system," says NCRPC Executive Director John Cyr. "Everyone needs a safety net and an educational support system can provide that plus keep people up to speed on what is happening."

Funding for this award is from the Kansas Rural Business Development Tax Credit program created by the 2004 Kansas Legislature as a means of promoting regional economic development in the areas of leadership development, business support services and

job creation.

Seven regions across the state were awarded \$1.0 million in 50% state tax credits with North Central Kansas being represented by the North Central Regional Planning Commission in Beloit, using NCKCN as the 501(c)3 organization to receive the donations and dispense the awards. The NCRPC has raised \$179,000 to date through sale of the credits.

This was the first award made by the North Central Kansas Initiative, but Cyr says it is not the last.

"It does set an example of how access to needed resources can be achieved and yet enable people to remain in their home community and not have to leave to receive the benefit," Cyr says.

For more information about how to contribute or about the North Central Kansas initiative, contact John Cyr at 785-738-2218.

AREA COMMUNITIES RECEIVE CDBG GRANTS

Kansas Department of Commerce (KDOC) recently announced nearly \$10.5 million in grants through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

Several grants, equaling approximately \$2.5 million, were awarded to North Central Kansas communities.

Housing Rehabilitation/

Neighborhood Development Grants were awarded to four area communities including Belleville, Clay Center, Clyde and Miltonvale.

Communities in the region receiving grants in the Community Facilities category include Assaria, Jewell, Frankfort, and Mitchell County on-behalf-of OCCK.

The City of Lorraine re-

ceived a grant in the Water and Sewer category and the City of Glasco received a KAN STEP award.

The Department of Commerce received a record number of 129 applications and made 38 awards. Changes in the Federal budget lowered the CDBG projects KDOC funded this year by about \$4 million.

Planning Ahead



Please mark your calendars with this tentative schedule of Executive Board

meetings or work study sessions for the remainder of the year. Meetings typically begin at 2 p.m. unless given further notice.

- Thursday, February 23
- Thursday, March 30
- Thursday, April 27
- Thursday, May 25
- Thursday, June 29
- Thursday, July 27
- Thursday, August 31
- Thursday, September 28
- Thursday, October 26
- Thursday, November 30
- Thursday, December 21

Did You Know?

Have something to sell or looking to buy a specific piece of equipment? The Purple Wave Auction Company may be able to help. The full-time auction company located in Manhattan, Kansas, is an industry leader in online and live auctions and has the state's largest registered online bidder list.

Concordia City Manager Larry Paine says using the Purple Wave Auction Company recently was key to the city's ability to quickly sell two fire vehicles.

"I liked it because it allowed us to find many more buyers than we could find using our normal notice process," Paine says. "All we had to do is a short notice of bid in the local paper and list the website for Purple Wave and wait. These folks did all the work."

For more information on these services, visit www.purplewave.com or call 785-537-5057.

WASHINGTON COUNTY YOUTH SURVEY REVEALS INTEREST TO RETURN HOME

A survey of Washington County school students in grades 7-12 revealed many wish to return to their home area someday if given the opportunity. Many also have interest in owning their own business.

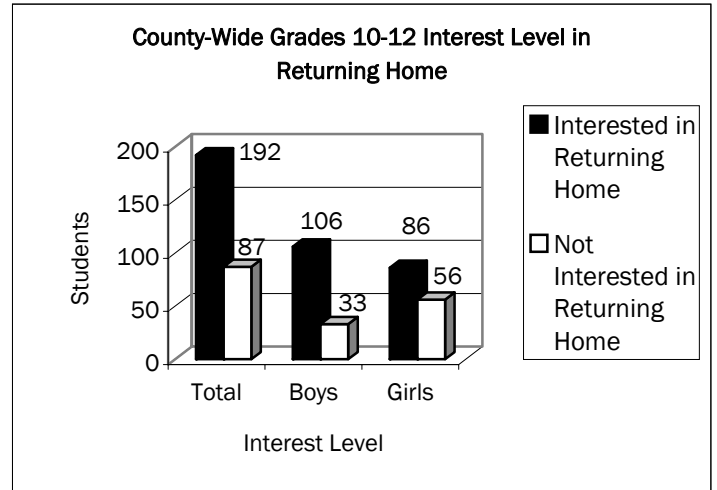
These results were gathered and compiled by Youth Coordinator Susan Fischer as part of the county's VISTA Program. Washington County received a grant to fund four Americorps VISTA volunteers focusing on the areas of youth attraction, fundraising, leadership and entrepreneurship.

In the 2005 survey, students in grades 10-12 were asked if they had an interest in returning to North Central Kansas.

Fischer, who was born and raised in Washington, Kansas, before graduating from Baker University in 2004, says the results were surprising to her.

"I was surprised at how many students were interested in returning to the area," Fischer says. "Well over half of the students from each school, both boys and girls, wanted to return."

Of the 192 students who



indicated interest in returning to the area, 106 were boys while only 86 were girls.

The most common reason students gave for wanting to return to North Central Kansas in the future was family ties. Other factors that rated high were safety, quality of life and cost of living.

The most common reasons given for not considering returning to the area included job opportunities elsewhere, lack of recreation/arts/entertainment, and lack of shopping options.

"The number one reason why girls did not want to return is the lack of job opportunities," Fischer says.

Students in grades 7-12 were also asked if they had an interest in owning a business. While interest differed from school to school, 61 percent of boys in the county stated an interest in owning a business in contrast to 42 percent of girls.

Several students, including 27 percent of boys and 14 percent of girls, reported already having a small business such as lawn care or web design.

Post-high school graduation plans were also asked to survey respondents in grades 10-12. More than 96

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WEATHERIZATION TEAM AWARDED FOR EFFORTS

The Kansas Housing Corporation recently recognized the NCRPC Weatherization Program with an Award of Excellence for outstanding effort during the Weatherization year.

The NCRPC oversees the weatherization of housing in 33 counties extending from Wabaunsee County to the Colorado border. The pro-

gram seeks to increase the energy efficiency of qualified residential housing.

Weatherization team members not pictured include Rod Thompson and Connie Cyr.



Staff pictured left to right are Dell Gier, Margaret Cathey, Jeff Maska, and Jeff Gansel.

MEET THE BOARD

NCRPC board member since 2004, Larry Paine worked in local government in six different states before landing his current job as Concordia City Manager in 2003.

Paine says being an "outsider" has helped him in his job.

"To me one of the most important things I've brought to the community is seeing who they are from an outsider's point of view," Paine says.

Promoting regionalism is also important to Paine.

"Part of our thinking has to change. We have to improve the quality of life in the region and not just in our towns," Paine says.

He says this was especially evident to him during Hurricane Katrina.

"It was clear to me that we have to know one another, trust one another and be willing to ask for help," Paine says.

Larry was recently selected president of the Kansas Association of City/County Management. He and his wife, Susan, have two grown children.

NCRPC ADMITS MARSHALL COUNTY AS MEMBER WITH PROVISIONAL STATUS

The number of counties served by the NCRPC staff expanded to 12 when the Executive Board voted recently to admit Marshall County as a member.

The county will first have a one-year "provisional" membership, which allows both parties time to evaluate needs and benefits.

"The provisional status works both ways for one year," says NCRPC Executive Director John Cyr. "It is a period of adjustment and evaluation just to ensure both parties get what they expect or anticipate."

NCRPC staff have already worked with the Marshall County cities of Blue Rapids, Frankfort and Waterville helping them address their local needs. Marshall County is also one of 19 counties defined by the Department of Commerce as being in North Central Kansas for purposes of the Rural Business Development Tax Credit Program.

One particular issue Marshall County seeks to im-

Marshall County Facts

Population: 10,965

Location: On the Kansas/Nebraska border situated between Washington and Nemaha County

County Seat: Marysville (pop. 3,271)

Cities and Towns: Axtell, Beattie, Blue Rapids, Frankfort, Home, Marysville, Summerfield, Vermillion, Waterville

Some Businesses Include: Landoll Corporation, Union Pacific Railroad, Georgia Pacific, Tension Envelope, and various trailer, forklift, and tillage manufacturers

prove is a housing shortage.

Commissioner Mick Keating made the request for membership to the NCRPC Executive Board and stated that in addition to assistance with their housing issues, they were aware of the benefits of partnering with the organization.

"Marshall County wants to be part of NCRPC because it knows programs and grants and requirements so one economic development director doesn't have to be an expert in everything," Keating says.

Cyr says NCRPC can provide several services.

"We can provide access

to professional services related to grant writing and administration, access to planning assistance and access to housing program knowledge," Cyr says.

Distance between Marshall County and the NCRPC office headquarters in Beloit presents a new challenge.

"How we address their needs from a distance will be the greatest hurdle to overcome," Cyr says. "The NCRPC will be benefited by learning how to do this. The overall organization will be benefited by having "new blood" introduced to the NCRPC, bringing new ideas and a different perspective."

Youth from Page 3

percent stated they want to attend a college or technical school of some kind.

Fischer says the survey results are primarily being used by VISTA volunteers, but other uses are planned.

"We are currently planning a career fair for Washington County schools," Fischer says. "I have also traveled to various community organizations and presented the information."

For more survey information, e-mail Fischer at youthvista@yahoo.com.

TAX CREDITS AVAILABLE FOR REHABILITATION

Buildings constructed before 1936 are abundant in most Kansas towns and rehabilitation of such buildings may qualify for a Federal Tax Credit.

This program for "non-historic" buildings offers a Federal Tax Credit equal to 10% of expenses incurred during a substantial rehabilitation of a qualified building.

Buildings must be built prior to 1936, but cannot be listed on the National Register or otherwise determined

to be eligible for the 20% Federal Tax Credit Program for historic structures.

Buildings must be income-producing such as a hotel, office space, industrial or agricultural uses. This credit does not apply to buildings for residential uses and rental housing does not qualify.

Rehabilitation projects must be "substantial," meaning that the expense of the rehabilitation must exceed the adjusted basis of

the building. There is no formal review process for this program.

State and Federal Tax Credit Programs also exist for qualified historic structures. These programs have a formal review process and the structure must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

For more details on any of these programs, see www.kshs.org/resource/taxcredits.htm or call 785-272-8681 ext. 240.

HONEY FARM IN FOURTH GENERATION OF OPERATION

When asked how many bees he has, Jerry Brown's standard answer is a "buzz-illion." Seems fitting given that Brown's Honey Farm in Haddam, Kansas, is the state's largest bee operation.

The farm, which currently has 4,200 beehives, got its start in the 1920s when Jerry's grandfather, Vernon Ade, began keeping bees.

"In the early 1900s it was common for families to have a few beehives just as it was common for families to have a few cows, some chickens or a goat," Jerry says.

Vernon died three years ago at the age of 97. Jerry's father, Robert Brown, is still involved with the beekeeping operation. Jerry's 16-year-old son, Nathan, has taken an active role in the operation and already has more than 100 hives of his own, making him one of the 20 largest beekeepers in Kansas.

The farm produced 27,500 gallons of honey in 2004 and 16,500 gallons in 2005. Timely rainfalls and more clover being available contributed to the excep-

tional production in 2004. Honey is stored in 55-gallon barrels until it can be transported to the honey packing plant in Hillsboro, Kansas, where it is then bottled and marketed.

Honey production is just one aspect of the Browns' business. Each January they travel to an area just outside Modesto, California, and essentially rent their beehives to almond growers for pollination. They manage the beehives, moving them as needed to ensure they have good sources of nectar and water and monitor the bees' health. Last year they stayed until May 10.

Brown's Honey Farm supplies bees to three large almond growers. Each acre requires three hives to pollinate and this year they plan to take more than 20 semi-loads of bees to California. A shortage of bees has increased the price almond growers are willing to pay to have bees. In addition, nearly 90 percent of the almond crop is dependent on bee pollination.

"The pollination has gotten to be a lot larger part of



Jerry Brown and son Nathan take a break from working bees at their Haddam farm where the bees winter. Each pallet shown holds four beehives.

our business than the honey production," Jerry says. "It's what has kept us in the bee business."

Although Brown's Honey Farm has seen many industry changes over the years, some things still stay the same. Throughout the year when their bees are not in California or wintering at the Haddam farm, they are divided over 130 locations in Kansas and Nebraska. In

return for keeping the bees, landowners receive honey and the benefit of pollination. Jerry says there is a waiting list of places that would like to have bees.

"There is nostalgia with some of the people who keep our bees for us," Nathan says. "Many of them remember their parents or grandparents having a few hives on their farm and they want that experience too."

Of course the beekeeping business is not without its hazards. Nathan says that an occasional sting is just part of the job.

"Even if you don't think you have a hole in your bee suit, you probably do," Nathan says laughingly.

But father and son both agree the family business is enjoyable.

"We have a rich heritage of beekeeping in our family," Jerry says. "At one point when my grandfather was still alive, we had four generations actively involved in our operation. We'll keep that going."

Know others who would like to receive this newsletter? Prefer e-mail format? Send contact information to thielen@ncrcn.com. Feedback is always welcome.

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