



Executive Board

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Dwight Frost, Jewell Co.
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Bill Garrison, Cloud Co.
Chuck Heidrick, City of Beloit
Judy Irvin, City of Salina
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Larry Paine, City of Concordia
Virgil Palen, Mitchell Co.
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Jeff Maska
Jeff Gansel
Dell Gier
Rod Thompson
Brett Beck

Upcoming Events

Thursday, June 28, 2 p.m.
Executive Board Meeting

Thursday, July 26, 2 p.m.
Executive Board Meeting

Thursday, Aug. 30, 2 p.m.
Executive Board Meeting

Friday, September 28
Organization Development
Workshop (Third in a series)
Location and details to be
announced

KAN STEP PROGRAM MAKES CHANGES TO COMPETITIVE FUNDING FORMAT

Due to the high demand for the Kansas Small Town Environmental Program (KAN STEP) funds, the program is moving to a competitive funding format. It previously operated on a first-come-first-served basis.

The KAN STEP program is offered by the Kansas Department of Commerce Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

"We are making the changes to the program in hopes that only the best projects get funded," says KAN STEP Program Manager Salih Doughramaji. "As CDBG allocations shrink we simply can't take the chance of funding projects that wouldn't be funded if they were in a competitive system."

The competitive process will begin with submittal of a pre-application on one of two semi-annual due



Volunteers work together to pour concrete for the Glasco KAN STEP Fire Station project.
Courtesy photo by Lynne Imboden, Glasco City Clerk.

dates. The deadlines in 2008 are January 1 and July 1. The pre-application will be used to make the case for the project and describe the project and need it will serve.

Points will be awarded based on project need, alternatives, scope of work, local effort, past efforts to address need, and past performance.

Projects that rate well will receive a site visit. Ap-

plicants have two chances to apply for KAN STEP funding for one project.

During site visits, Department of Commerce representatives will meet with the community leaders and volunteers and judge

commitment.

Based on the site visit, applicants will either be directed to re-evaluate their project or procure an architect or engineer who will then be asked to develop the cost estimate and prove the 40% cost savings over retail cost. Upon approval of the cost estimate, applicants will submit a full application.

For more on KAN STEP changes, contact NCRPC.

ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT SERIES UPDATE

The North Central Kansas Organization Development Series continued with its second session on May 30 at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene.

Michael Daigneault, senior governance consultant with BoardSource, Inc. returned to Kansas for the second time this spring to

facilitate the session.

The session's focus was on strategic thinking and its importance in creating an innovative organization.

The workshop was the second in a four-part series dedicated to Organization and Non-Profit Board Development. Attendees heard often about the importance of dedicating time

to think strategically.

"Exceptional boards allocate time to what matters most and continuously engage in strategic thinking to hone the organization's direction," Daigneault says.

He also talked on creating a culture of inquiry.

"Exceptional boards institutionalize a culture of
(Continued on page 2)

DID YOU KNOW?

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is administered by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).



The RTP grant program provides an 80/20 match, on a reimbursement basis, for eligible recreational trail and trail-related projects. This means entities fund 100% of the project and the KDWP will reimburse up to 80% of the approved total cost.

All projects must fall into one or more of three categories: motorized, non-motorized, or diversified recreational trail or trail-related projects. Proposals that provide for improved ADA and environmental impacts will receive high priority.

A grant may be used for the acquisition of land, trail corridor or long-term lease, or construction of outdoor recreational trails and trail facilities.

Trail and trail-related project proposals will not be accepted where the primary objective is to provide an alternative transportation corridor, such as bicycle lanes marked on an existing highway or sidewalks.

Applications for next Federal Fiscal Year are due August 1, 2007.

For more information, visit www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news/kdwp_info/grants.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: GROUPS MUST FIND WAYS TO THINK STRATEGICALLY

The second session of our four-part series on Non-Profit Board Development was held in late May; the focus being on “strategic thinking” and “creating a culture of inquiry.” There was discussion describing circumstances that often restrict an organization’s thought process and its subsequent ability to respond to challenges. These conditions are:

1. Failure to see information.
2. Failure to seek information.
3. Failure to use information.
4. Failure to share information.

This brought to mind a book written by Jared Diamond titled [Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed](#). In it, Diamond examines the complex ecological and cultural problems famed societies (i.e., Easter Island and its complete loss of trees) faced and failed to properly address. He attributes much of the problem to a failure

(Continued from page 1) inquiry, mutual respect, and constructive debate that leads to sound and shared decision making.”

Ideas to improve this culture were the following:

- Seek more information, question assumptions and challenge conclusions.
- Draw on multiple sources of information and perspectives.

From the Director’s Desk



John Cyr has been the NCRPC Executive Director since 1986.

of the society to recognize and deal with the situation at hand, breaking it down into four parts.

1. A group may fail to anticipate a problem before the problem actually arrives.
2. When the problem does arrive, the group may fail to perceive it.
3. After they perceive it, they may fail even to try to solve it.
4. Finally, they may try to solve it, but may not succeed.

Diamond credits such failure, in part, to “. . . conflicts of interest among members of the group and group dynamics.” If indi-

viduals within the social entity are unable to set aside tradition and embrace new methodology, then the social entity itself should not be expected to react any differently.

We see this in all aspects of community and economic development planning and it is here the NCRPC faces its greatest challenge. Many rural leaders both recognize and understand the problem, but they continue to draw upon past practices as a means of implementing economic growth. They thus choose to operate independent of their neighbors even though there is little to show for their efforts. What they fail to grasp is past practices can only provide inspiration, not answers. Those answers must come from engaging competing interests in cooperative planning initiatives such that solutions are developed to address common problems. The NCRPC has a great future ahead of it if it can but set its mind to overcome this challenge.



The Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, was the site of the second Organization Development session.

- Ensure all voices are heard.
- Advocate for solutions based on thoughtful analysis.

The final two sessions are scheduled on September 28 and November 2. Topics will include Ethics and Continuous Revitalization. To learn more, contact the NCRPC.

RURAL VOICES CONTEST WINNERS NAMED

Personal reflections on the future of rural Kansas were enough for two high school graduates from North Central Kansas to win cash awards in the first ever Rural Voices Youth Contest.

Claire de Rochefort-Reynolds, Concordia High School, won the contest and \$1,000. Ross Kee, St. John's Catholic High School, Beloit, was runner-up and received \$750.

The NCRPC sponsored the contest in an effort to create a dialog between youth and other facets of the population regarding the future of the region and rural Kansas.

"We hope it becomes a long series that continues to grow in participation and quality," Debra Ohlde, NCRPC Community Development Specialist, says. "We also hope it provided a vehicle that encouraged youth to become more fully aware of the sense of loyalty and affinity they have for their home."

With a topic of "Rural Kansas...Tomorrow's Possibilities," high school seniors in the NCRPC's 12-county service area — including Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Marshall, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic, Saline and Washington Counties — were eligible to submit an original work in the form of a written commentary, photo essay or video.

In the winning commentary, de Rochefort-Reynolds described her vision of the future of Rural Kansas.

"The future of Rural



Claire de Rochefort-Reynolds

Kansas lies in its people. We are strong, progressive, levelheaded, hardworking, optimistic, supportive and kind. Kansans are neither daunted by new possibilities nor intimidated by far horizons. Whether our economic future lies in agriculture, alternative fuel, or industry, we will be prepared and ready to confront its challenges together," de Rochefort-Reynolds says.

Claire also reminisced in her commentary about the impact of participating as a third grader in the Kansas Quarter design contest.

"The project made me take a new pride in my state and gave me the lasting belief that I am an important part of it," de Rochefort-Reynolds says.

Kee's commentary focused on the people of rural Kansas and the importance of technology.

"Rural Kansans are special people. Our traits include strong work ethics, committed values, and ownership in our community. We, ourselves, are important resources that are becoming difficult to find in this world," Kee says.



Ross Kee

He went on to talk about the Internet as both an asset and a challenge for rural Kansas.

"The Internet, while connecting us to the rest of the world, has also been a large competitor to our rural Kansas way of commerce. Rural Kansans are working harder than ever to compete in this global market while trying to preserve the infrastructure of rural America. Rural Kansans must step into this Internet market place and compete on a world platform," Kee says.

Both winners plan to use the cash awards for college expenses next year. Claire de Rochefort-Reynolds will attend Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin, and study social sciences. Ross Kee will attend Newman University, Wichita, Kansas, and study pre-dentistry.

The full text of the winning commentaries is published on the Eye on Kansas website (www.eyeonkansas.org) under the Rural Voices link.

The contest will be offered annually each spring.

MEET THE BOARD

Dwight Frost has served on the NCRPC Board since 2005 after being elected to the Jewell County Board of Commissioners.

Born and raised near Esbon in Jewell County, Dwight worked for 33 years as a rural



Dwight Frost

mail carrier for the United States Postal Service. For 30 years he delivered mail in Jewell County and traveled approximately 120 miles per day and for 3 years he worked in Phillips County where he traveled more than 200 miles per day. Dwight also has a business seeding grass and wildlife habitat for government contracts. His work, primarily in Jewell and Smith counties includes projects such as seeding grass for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), waterways, and conservation strips. In addition, Dwight farmed with his brother for 35 years and still helps with harvest.

He is active in the Esbon Lions Club and was Third District President of Rural Carriers for six years. Dwight is married to Beverly and has one daughter, three stepchildren and one granddaughter. He enjoys traveling and all types of hunting.

M & G DESIGNS, INC. EXPANDS WITH HELP FROM LOANS

Sylvan-Grove based M & G Designs, Inc. received help this Spring from NetWork Kansas in the form of a loan to support business growth.

The company fabricates and installs marble and granite custom countertops for cabinet shops and designers nationwide.

M & G Designs is using the loan — along with other funds — to build a larger manufacturing facility with 16,000 square feet of usable space and to purchase new, state-of-the-art equipment.

Four Rivers Development, Inc. (FORDI), is the regional NetWork Kansas resource partner administering the matching loan.

“The equipment we’re purchasing and the new facility we’re building with the additional capital from Thunder Bank of Sylvan Grove, Lincoln County Economic Development Foundation, NetWork Kansas and FORDI will help us expand our business by improving production efficien-

cies and allowing us to hire additional staff — both of which will also enable us to take on larger jobs,” says Randy Schroeder, M & G Designs’ President.

Thunder Bank CEO/President Mark Obermuller says his organization’s loan helped the company purchase machinery/equipment that maximizes business potential.

“We are very proud to have them located in Sylvan Grove,” Obermuller says. “Their growing business is proof that a viable business can be started even in the smallest of communities if the management has the foresight and desire.”

M & G Designs, Inc. has been in existence since 1993. It purchased Stonwurks in 2004. Stonwurks specializes in manufacturing Strata Panels™. These panels are made from thin cut natural marble or granite laminated to fiberglass faced honeycomb aluminum backing. The product can then be made into



Construction took place this Spring on a new building that will house business operations of M & G Designs, Inc. in Sylvan Grove.

Courtesy photo by Marion McReynolds, Lincoln Sentinel-Republican.

anything where natural stone is desired, but light weight is needed such as yacht/boat manufacturers, sculpture bases, signage, elevator cabs, and airplane/luxury motor coach manufacturers.

Stonwurks was combined with M & G’s granite kitchen and countertop business to gain production efficiencies. New production equipment and the new building construction will benefit both segments by decreasing turnaround time on projects, allowing the business to take on lar-

ger projects and giving additional space for storing inventory and for working indoors year-round.

NetWork Kansas was established as a component of the Kansas Economic Growth Act of 2004. It pro-

vides expertise, education and economic resources to Kansas entrepreneurs and small business owners in rural and distressed communities, typically in the form of unsecured loans that match the terms of other financing obtained by a NetWork Kansas resource partner working on behalf of the entrepreneur.

For more information, visit www.networkkansas.com or contact FORDI General Manager Debra Peters at 785-738-2210. For more on Stonwurks, visit www.stonwurks.com.

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

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