



NCRPC NEWS

North Central Regional Planning Commission
Serving Kansans Since 1972

August/September 2009
www.ncrpc.org

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Upcoming Events

Thursday, August 27, 2 p.m.

Executive Board Meeting

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2 p.m.

Executive Board Meeting

Thursday, October 29, 2 p.m.

Executive Board Meeting

COMMUNITIES RECEIVE GRANT AWARDS

Kansas Department of Commerce announced in late July the awarding of nearly \$13 million in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to 44 Kansas communities.

Four communities in North Central Kansas, including Cawker City, Glasco, Lincoln Center, and Salina, are among that list of new awardees.

The \$13 million included just over \$4 million in stimulus dollars.

The City of Cawker City, was awarded \$381,500 to rehabilitate 15 housing units and demolish four dilapidated unsafe residential structures in a designated target area within city limits. The city is



matching the grant with \$2,000.

The City of Glasco was awarded \$188,040 to complete 18 blocks of street surfacing improvements using a microsurfacing slurry and seal process and three blocks of downtown curb and gutter reconstruction. The city is providing \$19,000 in matching funds.

The City of Lincoln Center was awarded \$90,000 to dig one new public water supply well and make improvements to two existing wells. The city is providing \$99,850 in matching funds.

The City of Salina was awarded \$382,600 to rehabilitate 16 housing units within the city with preference given to the "Indian Village" area. The city is matching the grant with \$2,000.

To view the full list of communities awarded, visit www.kansascommerce.com.

The NCRPC staff is currently working with communities that are making application for 2010 CDBG grant funds. Deadlines for those funds are this fall.

If your community is considering applying for a grant at some point to address a community need and would like assistance, please contact the NCRPC and we can help support and guide your community in that process.

STATE ENERGY OFFICE ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVES, PROGRAMS USING ARRA FUNDS

The State Energy office, a Division of the Kansas Corporation Commission, under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) will receive approximately \$52 million in additional funding from the Department of Energy.

The funding comes through three different federal programs:

- \$38,284,000 through the State Energy Program;
- \$9,593,500 through Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block; and

- \$2.6 million for a new Appliance Rebate Program.

Some programs, such as the Rebate Program for Appliances, are still in the planning phases and will need final approval from the Department of Energy before they are available to the public. The State Energy Office expects the Appliance Rebate Program will be available sometime in the late fall.

Final approval has been received for the following new initiatives using State

Energy Program (SEP) funds:

- 1.) Efficiency Kansas Loan Program
- 2.) Energy Auditor Training and Scholarships
- 3.) Equipment for New Energy Auditors
- 4.) Rebates for Efficiency Kansas Energy Audits
- 5.) Rebates to Banks for Loan Fees for Efficiency Kansas Loans
- 6.) Utility Rate Design—Planning for Comprehensive Changes.

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**HIGH SCHOOL
SENIORS INVITED
TO SHARE TALENT,
WIN CASH**

Another school year is here, making it time to announce the Fourth Annual RuralVoices Youth Contest.

The contest is open to any senior in high school who lives in and/or is attending a public or private high school which district falls in the 12 county NCRPC service area – Cloud, Washington, Clay, Lincoln, Ellsworth, Marshall, Mitchell, Ottawa, Jewell, Republic, Saline, Dickinson. Home school students in this same area may also participate.

The 2009-2010 contest theme is “Rural Kansas...Working Together.” Students may choose to submit an original work of either a written essay, a series of photographs, or a short video.

The top entry in each of the three categories will be awarded \$650 and publication on the *EyeonKansas.org* web site. The deadline is November 15, 2009.

For additional information, visit www.eyeonkansas.org/ruralvoices or contact Lori Thielen by email at lthielen@nckcn.com.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: COMMUNITIES SHOULD STRIVE TO MAINTAIN BEAUTY

Computer equipment may fail, brake pads may wear thin and roofs may become brittle and suspect, but the Kansas landscape does not grow less amazing or awe inspiring. Naturally, this state has many features worthy of deep pondering. For instance, after leaving a community gathering in Esbon recently I observed a doe and fawn darting to a bright field of golden sunflowers. Off to the west was a purple and orange sunset.

Nature can also be harmful as evidenced recently in southern Salina and central Dickinson County. The latter area saw 24 miles or so of 345,000 voltage power lines ripped down from their lofty perches. Workforces and equipment will clean up debris, replace the



Doug McKinney is the NCRPC Executive Director.

valuable materials and make the system stronger than before. But, when mankind is neglectful the result is dilapidation, property value decline, apathy and lack of community pride. Just as the positive abounds, aesthetic ugliness and environmental hazards also exist in many communities. Can we change

such circumstance for local and regional betterment? Sure. It takes planning, willingness and time. One resource of potential help is the recent passage of HB 2155, which authorizes cities to land bank unused and abandoned properties so they can be sold for other uses. The whole process is laid out in the bill. The main focus is to get property back into worthwhile use. Contact NCRPC housing staff if you seek more input on these subjects.

Off the soapbox to a place of standing ovation as I applaud the youth of North Central Kansas who recently completed and showed off their projects at county fairs. Give a high five or pat on the back to a youth near you. Encourage others to give it a try next year. Safe journeys.

(Continued from page 1)

The State Energy Office has submitted its application to the Department of Energy (DOE) for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG). These funds will be used for cities and counties that did not receive direct EECBG allocations from the federal government. Pending DOE approval, the State Energy Office proposes to use these funds as outlined below:

- 1.) Renewable Energy Grants
- 2.) Facility Conservation Improvement Program (FCIP) Rebates

- 3.) FCIP Energy Savings Project Grants
 - 4.) Hybrid Vehicle Grants
- Additional program details or status updates of the various initiatives that are planned by the SEP are available by visiting www.kcc.state.ks.us/energy/arra.htm.

One program for which details are available is the Efficiency Kansas Loan Program. The program will establish a revolving loan fund to finance cost-effective, energy efficient improvements in existing Kansas homes and small businesses.

Efficiency Kansas requires all funded projects to be based on energy



audits performed by Efficiency Kansas qualified auditors.

Participants will be able to access Efficiency Kansas either through Partner Banks or Partner Utilities. More information about participating banks and utilities will be available in coming months.

For more about the Efficiency Kansas Loan Program, visit www.eyeonkansas.com or call 785-271-3185.

SALINA SELECTED AS NEW “E-COMMUNITY”

Continuing the success of the Entrepreneurship (E-) Community Partnership, NetWork Kansas selected eight additional communities, including the City of Salina, to participate during its third competitive round. These communities will partner with NetWork Kansas to raise up to \$1.2 million in seed funding for entrepreneurs in their respective communities.

Every E-Community benefits from an injection of capital that is raised locally through the NetWork Kansas Entrepreneurship Tax Credit Program. This funding is used to help

start and grow businesses in rural Kansas communities.

“Salina is committed to growing our community through entrepreneurship,” said Larry Powell, Director of Business Retention and Expansion, Salina Area Chamber of Commerce. “Project Open is our local area program to help entrepreneurs succeed.”

Project Open is the result of extensive collaboration between leading Salina business agencies including the City of Salina, Salina Area Chamber of Commerce, Salina Economic Development Incentive



Council (SEDIC), and Salina Downtown, Inc., as well as regional

agencies including North Central Regional Planning Commission (NCRPC) and North Central Kansas Small Business Development Center (NCKSBDC).

For complete information about Project Open and the NetWork Kansas E-Community Partnership or Entrepreneurship Tax Credits, e-mail open@salinakansas.org, or call 785-827-9301.

Thanks to NetWork Kansas and the Project Open partners for contributing this article.

MEET THE BOARD



Murray McGee joined the NCRPC Board in 2008. He has served as the Mitchell County Community Development Director since October 2003. His focus within this position is to retain, expand and attract businesses to areas within Mitchell County. Murray is certified as a Business Retention and Expansion Project Coordinator.

Previously Murray was the Convention and Visitors Bureau Director in Franklin County, where he received the Governor's Tourism Award in 2002. Murray is also President of the North Central Kansas Rural Development Council, is a founding member of the Mitchell County Crime Stoppers, the Beloit Chamber of Commerce and the Solomon Valley Economic Development group. He received a bachelor's degree in Communication from Fort Hays State University.

Murray is married and has two adult children and a grandson and enjoys hunting, fishing and woodworking.

TEN REASONS TO BUY, SUPPORT LOCAL

1. Money Spent Local, Stays Local.

When you shop in your community you also create jobs, fund services like education and health and safety services through taxes, and promote community development.

2. Local Businesses Contribute to the Community.

In many community surveys about 90% of local business owners contribute to their community by volunteering and making donations. How can area businesses support your cause if you don't support them?

3. Local Businesses Provide Jobs.

Supporting local businesses means you are helping to secure jobs and opportunities for your neighbors, family and

community. These employees in turn spend in the local economy.

4. Shopping Local Saves You Money.

Choosing to shop local saves fuel costs, meal costs, and online shipping fees, not to mention long lines, traffic, weather concerns, and travel time.

5. Lower Environmental Impact.

Reduce your environmental footprint. Shopping local means you are not burning fuel and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

6. Entrepreneurship.

Local entrepreneurship fosters economic innovation and prosperity. The success of locally owned businesses provides inspiration to young people, proving that they can stay in or return to

their community to prosper.

7. Get Better Service.

It is no secret that local people are caring, friendly people — your neighbors!

8. Consider What Retailers Face.

They purchased their stock six months ago, hoping to sell it today, pay their employees, pay their taxes, heating and cooling costs, donate to many community programs, and hopefully pay themselves.

9. Lots of Great Products and Services.

Think of the businesses in your area; with so many products and services the choices are endless.

10. Keep Your Community Unique.

By choosing to support local businesses you help maintain the diverse, distinct character.

THUNDERSTRUCK, INC. MANUFACTURING UNIQUE TRUCK ACCESSORIES IN NORTH CENTRAL KANSAS

ThunderStruck, Inc. began production in Salina in March 2008. The business manufactures heavy-duty grill guards, front-end replacements, rear bumpers, headache racks, and running boards for Chevrolet, Ford, Dodge, GMC, and most full-size trucks.

The products are uniquely designed to conform to the individual models' contour, giving it a one-of-a-kind look.

Thunderstruck Truck Accessories entered the market in Fall 2000 and was operated as a part-time division within a company called Bruton Manufacturing in Texas. A downturn in the cotton industry changed the plans of the Texas business and Casen Brown and Jeff Turner were able to purchase the truck accessories division's equipment, website, and dealer network serving a 13-state area primarily in

the Central and North Central United States.

ThunderStruck, Inc. co-owners are Casen and Virginia Brown and Jeff and Tandi Turner. Casen is in charge of sales and Jeff is in charge of production. Both Virginia and Tandi provide bookkeeping/administrative assistance.

Casen and Virginia also own and operate Lift Truck Specialists of Kansas, which has operated in Salina since 1996.

Jeff also owns a part-time auto body repair business, which he has operated since 1988.

The business has created seven jobs, excluding the owners.

"ThunderStruck provides jobs for skilled machinists/welders at above average wages, with the opportunity to receive additional training," says Aaron White, Salina Area Chamber of Commerce Business Retention and Expansion Project Coordinator. "The



ThunderStruck, Inc., co-owners Casen Brown (left) and Jeff Turner (right) are pictured with a sample of the equipment manufactured at their business, which is located near K-State at Salina.

business also brings a unique product to the aftermarket truck components industry."

Financing of the business has been made possible by personal investment from the owners, the NCK Business Development Fund, StartUp Kansas Loan Program, Central National Bank, and incentives from the City of Salina.

ThunderStruck will have a booth and many special sales at the Kansas State Fair September 11-20.

For more information about the business, visit www.thunderstruckinc.com. For more information about the financing programs used, contact Four Rivers Development Inc. Manager, Debra Peters, at 785-738-2210 or by e-mail at dpeters@nckcn.com.

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 Online Journal of Rural Research
 and Policy
www.ojrrp.org
 Eye on Kansas
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