



NCRPC NEWS

North Central Regional Planning Commission
Serving Kansans Since 1972

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www.ncrpc.org

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Upcoming Events

Thursday, March 31, 2 p.m.
Thursday, April 28, 2 p.m.
Executive Board Meetings

Wednesday, April 20
CDBG Application Workshop
Lyons, KS

RURAL VOICES CONTEST WINNERS NAMED

Three high school seniors from North Central Kansas will each receive a cash award of \$650 for submitting a top entry in the Fifth Annual RuralVoices Youth Contest sponsored by the NCRPC.

Students had three options to participate that included submitting a written essay, a video or a photo series. Winners were Alexandria Feldkamp, Lincoln Junior/Senior High School, written essay; Katie Hesting, Rock Hills High School, video; and Sarah Kratzer, Ellsworth High School, photo series. All three students are

recognized with the John R. Cyr RuralVoices Award, which is named in honor of Cyr who served for 22 years as the NCRPC Executive Director. The top entries are also published on the Eye on Kansas Online Magazine, which is a NCRPC sister site.

The contest theme was "Rural Kansas...Creating a Path to the Future Now."

"It's always interesting to see how each student interprets the theme," Lori Thielen, NCRPC Contest Coordinator, says. "Our judges once again had a great selection of entries from which to choose."

Feldkamp, who won with her written essay, says the theme was relevant.

"I think the topic was a very modern and applicable issue that so many struggling towns are faced with: that is, how to retain and increase their city's population. So many cities are reluctant to set forth an optimistic and ambitious plan in fear that they will jeopardize what strengths they possess now," Feldkamp says.

To view this year's top entries or to learn more about the contest, visit www.eyeonkansas.org/ruralvoices/.



Alexandria Feldkamp



Katie Hesting



Sarah Kratzer

NEW CDBG GRANTS AWARDED IN REGION

Several communities in the region will receive funding to help with a variety of improvement projects. The funds will come from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program administered by the Department of Commerce.

The City of Aurora will receive \$43,461 to install new sidewalks along with curb and gutters to improve drainage issues. The city will provide \$30,000 in matching funds.

The City of Belleville will receive \$400,000 for street reconstruction. The

city will provide \$477,933 in matching funds.

The City of Blue Rapids will receive \$391,000 for a housing rehabilitation and demolition grant.

The City of Enterprise will receive \$390,250 for a housing rehabilitation grant.

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PEPSI REFRESH PROJECT TO ACCEPT IDEAS

The Pepsi Refresh Project will begin its first grant cycle of the year on April 4 by accepting applications in the category of Arts & Music. Other funding categories will include Education, Communities, and the Pepsi Challenge. There will be eight grant cycles in 2011.

Individuals or groups may submit a refreshing idea for positive change in their community and then promote the idea if selected to advance in the process. If the idea gets enough votes to land towards the top of the grant tier it may get funding from Pepsi.

Each month, up to \$1.215 million in grants can be awarded. Project grants range from \$5,000 up to \$50,000.

Ideas must have a positive impact on the community and must be able to be completed within 12 months of receiving the funding. After the initial cycle in April, submissions continue monthly through November with each cycle beginning the first and ending the fifth of the month.

For more information or to submit an idea, visit the website at www.refresheverything.com.

FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: LET'S DO MORE THAN JUST TOLERATE RURAL

Is "rural" a four-letter word? Well of course it isn't, but I found myself wondering this recently when a colleague pointed out that, to some, the connotation of the word is only negative. I was almost hurt at the suggestion, from one of our own, that rural screams rustic and uncultured. Uncultured stung a bit, rustic not so much.

The message we communicate about ourselves is important. A recent study of young people in New England by the Carsey Institute (www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/IB-24-Cox-Tucker-No-Place-Final-Web.pdf) demonstrates the importance of helping this demographic develop a strong sense of place and positive attitude toward their home towns.

According to the preliminary results, it is key to finishing college, a desire to return home and having a positive sense of self. Young people who were involved in their communities were able to better figure out who they are and could better visualize the advantages of living in their community in the future.

We should step up to the challenge and put a spin on the rural way of life that emphasizes the positives and the potential in a way that might speak to a young aspiring resident or someone who doesn't already love a place in the heartland. Let's discuss some practical ways to make that happen.



Debra Carlson Ohlde, Clyde, is the NCRPC Assistant Director.

Career education in our local high schools should showcase professional careers, highly technical manufacturing and telecommuting positions in the area. It should also emphasize the advantages of owning your own business. Not with the idea of ignoring the downside, but to plant the seed that it is a viable and attractive option.

Communities should build relationships with area technical and community colleges, first, to strengthen the ties between students and the rural area where they are being educated. Robert D. Atkinson of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation in Washington, D.C. has documented the link between a desire to locate permanently in an area and attending college in that area.

Secondly, to reach out to the many people studying in technical colleges who are potential candidates for small business operation. Many counties could use another auto body repair business, construction company, or

plumber. These future business owners are currently in the student body of area technical colleges. And one of them may be thinking about the next big innovation in their field.

The focus on career choice for young people should broaden to emphasize choices about location and work style (telecommuting or free-lancing for instance). While a career is important to who we are, what young people are really choosing is a way of life. It is important for them to hear that it does make sense to choose a location to live and/or a work style first and then find a career that will mesh with those choices.

As with all things in life, the character of a place is often not so much about what you see, but how you see and experience it. How we communicate about our rural home creates its character in the mind of others. The character of a small town, like the character of a person isn't usually visible on the surface, you have to look deep.

So the next time you chat with someone who may not appreciate the heartland, don't miss the chance to correct them if they cast "rural" in a negative light. I challenge you to proudly state "That isn't what it means to me" and feel free to offer examples of the advantages of living here. After all, you never know what set of impressionable ears might be listening.

KAN STEP PROJECTS REQUIRE PLANNING

Communities that cannot secure matching funds to compete for Kansas Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds have an option with the Kansas Small Towns Environment Program (KAN STEP).

KAN STEP is a competitive self-help program designed to fund the construction of buildings such as fire stations and community centers and the replacement of waterlines.

The grants require the use of volunteer labor to match CDBG funds. A 40% cost savings must be demonstrated to be eligible. Funding is targeted to professional services and materials.

"Kan Steps need to be thought of earlier because of the community planning

and volunteers involved," Mandy Fincham, Community Development Specialist says.

Someone familiar with the planning process is Russ Riffel, Dickinson County RFD 1 Fire Chief. Riffel served as the main "sparkplug" in the KAN STEP process for the station in Woodbine.

"It was definitely more time consuming than I thought it would be, but it's been well worth it," Riffel says. "I actually first made contact with Commerce in early 2005 and we just completed our project."

The KAN STEP program is for communities under 2,500 in population.



The Dickinson County Fire District 1 Station was recently constructed with volunteer labor in Woodbine as a result of a KAN STEP grant.

"History has shown that this program is most successful in smaller cities where neighbor helping neighbor is far more common than in larger localities," Salih Doughramaji, Commerce KAN STEP Manager, says.

For a list of projects, visit <http://krwa.net/projects/projects.shtml>.

The next KAN STEP application deadline is August 15. Contact the NCRPC for assistance.

MEET THE STAFF



Lisa Peters

The NCRPC welcomed Lisa Peters in January as a weatherization clerk.

Her primary duties are to process applications for the Household Weatherization Program, which has income as its primary eligibility criteria. Lisa also provides information to potential weatherization clients. Program demand is high and additional funding has been received.

A native of Marquette, Kansas, Lisa graduated from Marquette High School. She and her husband, Dave, moved to the Beloit area in November 2010 so that Dave could be involved in his family's farming operation. Prior to her position with the NCRPC, Lisa spent 16 years working in the insurance business, 11 of which were with Farm Bureau in Salina. Lisa has two grown children, William Godfrey and Lindsey Harty. William and his wife are expecting their first child in June. Lindsey is in the U.S. Army and is stationed in Alabama.

Lisa enjoys spending time outside.

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The City of Glasco will receive \$175,680 for improvements to its wastewater treatment system. The city and KDHE will provide \$175,600 in matching funds.

The City of Solomon will receive \$195,675 to also make improvements to its wastewater treatment system. The city and KDHE will provide \$198,175 in matching funds.

In October 2010, Jewell County also received notice that they were awarded \$300,00 for a KAN STEP project to construct a fire station in Esbon.

A CDBG application workshop for FY 2012 will be April 20 in Lyons. Contact the NCRPC with questions or for assistance.

NEW EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE

New interactive training simulators are now available in the region that will allow sheriff and police department personnel a unique opportunity to train on multiple topics that can evolve with the ever-changing challenges faced by law enforcement today.

Three simulator systems, called MILO, were purchased with North Central Homeland Security Regional funds.

Two of the systems are portable and are located in Republic County and Lincoln County. The other system is fixed and is located at Crisis City in Salina.

"This equipment will enhance law enforcement capabilities within the region and state to be well trained and respond to and recover from many different types of incidents," Sherry Angell, NCKPHI Regional Coordinator, says.

If interested in setting up a training or use of the system, contact Raymond Raney, Republic County Emergency Manager; Russ Black, Lincoln County Sheriff; or Dennis Colsden, North Central Regional Emergency Management Coordinator. Currently nine officers are trained on the system with plans for additional future classes.

COUPLE PURCHASES FUNK MEDICAL & MOBILITY, INC.

Funk Medical & Mobility, Inc. has been a fixture in the Concordia downtown since 2001. Now new owners are continuing the decade-long tradition.

Effective December 1, 2010, Justin and Kim Robbins purchased the existing business from previous owners Doug and Kathy Funk. The business continues under its founding name.

The medical and supply business sales, rents, and services medical equipment such as wheel chairs, crutches, electric scooters, walkers, oxygen, beds, and many other items to service the needs of its client base in North Central Kansas and South Central Nebraska.

Funk Medical & Mobility, Inc. has been an accredited Medicare/Medicaid provider since December 2008.

The business works to locate, order, and deliver hard-to-find and specialized equipment.

Justin Robbins is now President and manages the day-to-day operations of the business. His wife, Kim, provides accounting services to the business while maintaining her employment with the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

The Robbins both have Bachelor's degrees in Business Administration.

Justin previously spent the majority of his career at the Payless Shoesource corporate office and says he is enjoying the change.

"It's refreshing dealing with a different type of business that happens to be located in a small town and has a different type of clientele," Robbins says.

Keeping up with Medicare and insurance reimbursement is a daily



Funk Medical & Mobility, Inc. has been located at 210 W. 6th Street in downtown Concordia since 2001. This location serves as the business showroom, offices, warehouse and service center for the medical equipment and supplies.

challenge, providing just one reason that Justin was glad to be able to keep the current staff in place.

"We chose to get into the health care industry because of its nature as a 'need' business instead of a 'want' business," Justin says. "We obviously expected challenges along the way but things are going well for us so far."

To view the company website, [visit www.funkmedical.com](http://www.funkmedical.com).

This business purchase was made possible with funding from The Citizens National Bank, the Four Rivers NCKBDF Loan Pool and significant investment by the owners.

For more information about the financing programs used, contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Finance Director at 785-738-2218 or email dpeters@nckcn.com or visit www.ncrpc.org/services/business.html.

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