



## 2011 IN REVIEW: YEAR IS ANOTHER BUSY ONE FOR NCRPC

The past year was another busy one as the NCRPC continued to strive to carry out its mission to enhance regional economic opportunity and community development. What follows is a small representation of accomplishments for the organization in 2011 as well as exciting changes in the lives of some of our staff members.

- Staff provided project planning assistance that led to the writing and submittal of more than 20 applications for funding assistance across the region.
- Three staff members became newly certified for CDBG Administration.
- Lisa Peters was hired to assist with the Household Weatherization Program and began work in January, bringing total staff to 22.
- Grants were awarded to seven communities in 2011 for projects in which staff helped plan.
- NCKCN, an affiliate of the NCRPC, upgraded the Wireless local access in Belleville to 3.65GHz NexGen® 4G wireless. This upgrade expands the service of this technology from just the Beloit area that was installed in 2010. The upgrade also allows residents in the rural areas that do not have access to Cunningham cable the high speed access that the towns have.
- The NCRPC Business Loan Program was successful in assisting 15 businesses with financing in its 12-county service area including 8 expansions, 4 start-ups, and 3 purchases in North Central Kansas. These projects totaled over \$4.8 million dollars and the businesses plan to create 36+ and retain 9+ full-time equivalent jobs within the next 2 years.
- The North Central Kansas Rural Business Development Tax Credit Program was once again successful in finding donors willing to contribute \$324,750 in the aggregate to the regional economic development fund in exchange for 75% state tax credits from the \$257,143 in credits allocated NCKCN by the Kansas Department of Commerce.
- The NCRPC continues to act as fiscal agent for six (6) of the state's seven (7) Regional Homeland Security Councils. The NCRPC contract is with the Kansas Highway Patrol, the state administrative authority for the program. The fiscal agent responsibilities has staff traveling to all four corners of the state on a quarterly basis, helping the regions take the steps necessary to develop regional emergency preparedness.
- The Office of Inspector General (OIG) performed a process audit of the Kansas Homeland Security program this past year as part of OIG's on-going review of the national program itself. NCRPC worked closely with the Kansas Highway Patrol during the audit.
- Weatherization Director, Margaret Cathey, attended the National Association for State Community Services Programs conference in Florida. The purpose was to give ideas on how to scale down production to pre-ARRA levels.
- Eight staff members attended the National Weatherization Conference in New Orleans.
- The Weatherization program has completed work on 266 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), 26 Department of Energy (DOE), and 122 Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) projects at three-quarters of the way through the current grant period.
- The office car was replaced after seven years of use.
- NCKCN Wireless Technician, Brett Beck, and his wife, Brianne, welcomed their first child. A daughter, Madison Jean Beck, was born on May 23, 2011.
- Weatherization Clerk Lisa Peters celebrated two family milestones this year with the birth of her first grandchild, Hudson, and the marriage of her daughter, Lindsey.

### Leadership : NCRPC Executive Board

**Chair:**  
Johnita Crawford, Cloud Co.

**Vice Chair:**  
Tim Vandall, City of Ellsworth

**Secretary/Treasurer:**  
Brian Ellert, Mitchell Co.

**Executive Board Members:**  
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Steve Errebo, Lincoln Co.  
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## ED Program Changes

The Kansas Department of Commerce Economic Development Community Development Block Grant program is undergoing changes for 2012. They include the application period being an open window January 1 through December 10, 2012 and modifications to the infrastructure assistance. The latter includes payback for non-retail businesses being 25% loan over 10 years at 0% interest with 75% in grant funding, and payback for retail businesses being 50% loan over 10 years at 0% interest with 50% grant funding. Special assessments remain the mechanism for businesses to repay the city/county for loan assistance. The infrastructure funding is limited to assisting two companies.

Other details of the program remain intact such as the environmental review period of 45 days, the eligible applicants being a city or a county on behalf of a private business, job creation or retention requirements of 1 full-time job for every \$35,000 of CDBG funding and a maximum of \$750,000 in CDBG \$ or a minimum of \$100,000 in CDBG \$ depending on the jobs involved. Matching funds must be \$0.50 of non-CDBG for every \$1 of CDBG monies. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the jobs must benefit low-and-moderate income persons. The applicant must have a public hearing describing the project.

The NCRPC has certified project administrators skilled in project development and can assist your community with this program and other funding assistance.

## Inspectors' Training, Certifications Numerous

The NCRPC has six inspectors who travel, on average, anywhere from 20,000 to 35,000 miles a year to carry out inspections for various housing programs within the region and beyond.

Housing Director Carol Torkelson says that all six inspectors are trained to do weatherization inspections, which includes instrumented furnace inspections. In addition, three inspectors are certified Lead Assessors, three are certified Asbestos Inspectors, and two are certified Radon Measurement Technicians.

Weatherization inspectors are trained to operate blower door, gas detector, infrared camera and other diagnostic equipment. Lead Assessors operate an XRF analyzer used to detect Lead.

The Kansas Housing Resources Corporation oversees weatherization certification while KDHE oversees licensing for Lead Assessments, Asbestos Inspection and Radon Measurement.

All of the housing programs that the NCRPC administers has income as an eligibility criteria. Because of this, Torkelson says that low income residents are dependent on the inspectors for delivery of services.

"The inspectors have kept quite busy the past few years due to an increase in weatherization funding and housing projects, but these are ex-

pected to decrease soon with the reduction of Federal funds," Margaret Cathey, Weatherization Director, says.

Demand for asbestos inspections has increased slightly due to increased emphasis on State regulations regarding Asbestos. Those regulations require an inspection completed prior to any renovation or demolition of commercial or public structures. For demolition, a notification is required at least 10 working days prior to the

start of demolition — even if asbestos is not found in the inspection.

"Asbestos inspections are starting to increase and as people learn the rules it will continue to increase," Jeff Maska, Housing Inspector, says. "If people were more aware of it and the health risks, the inspections would increase even more. It was used in more than 3,600 building materials."

Maska also points out there is a difference between the Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections that the NCRPC inspectors do and traditional home inspections.

"HQS inspections are very minimal, whereas a home inspection is very detailed," Maska says.

Inspector Jeff Gansel says each type of inspection has challenges.

"The general challenge is helping the client understand that the inspection has limitations and some problems cannot be addressed in the program," Gansel says.



The home above was part of a Housing Rehabilitation program in the region.

## looking ahead : Dates, Meetings, and Deadlines

**Thursday, Feb. 23**

**Thursday, March 29**

**Thursday, April 26**

Executive Board Meetings  
Beloit Main Office, 2 p.m.

**Friday, Feb. 3 & Saturday, Feb. 4**

BIG Rural Brainstorm

Newton — [www.kansassampler.org](http://www.kansassampler.org)

**Mondays from Feb. 4-April 2**

Kauffman Foundation FastTrac®

New Venture Classes, Salina, 6-9 p.m.

Contact Phyll Klima:

[pklima@salinadowntown.com](mailto:pklima@salinadowntown.com)

**Thursday, March 1**

2012 Our Town Grants App. Deadline

[www.arts.gov/national/ourtown/](http://www.arts.gov/national/ourtown/)

**Wednesday, April 11**

Asset Management Workshop  
for Utilities

Hays — [www.kmunet.org](http://www.kmunet.org)

Your ideas are welcome! Have something interesting to share with our readers? Send suggestions to Lori at [lthielen@nckcn.com](mailto:lthielen@nckcn.com).

What are you going to be when you grow up? Where do you want to go to college? What are you going to study? Kids from ages 3 to 18 often hear these questions. I'm personally vowing instead to ask "where do you want to live when you grow up?"

Today we can do almost anything from almost anywhere; or at least some version of a desired job in a chosen field. Why not choose the environment you love rather than allowing a job offer to dictate your home for the rest of your life?

I remember once hearing someone talk about making a life for themselves and comparing it to quilting; piecing together a life. The idea, that you can organize your life in ways that are outside the norm to create the life you really want to live is exciting. What works for one person's life might not work for another; we don't all like the same colors or patterns in our quilts. Interestingly, when you see rural America from above the geography mimics a quilt. The variety is beautiful and the land stays fruitful when its use is strategically varied.

To shift the thinking of our youth, we must communicate that it is important to build a skill set and a way of reasoning that allows you to apply your best in many different situations. Think less about what company you want to work for and more about what you like to do and then become proficient at that skill.

Another fundamental part of this shift is encouraging risk taking and early investment. The wealth of a region only grows through ownership and control of assets. Investment sparks pride, long-term commitment and a strong sense of community; all keys to making a community a home.

The current economy has some looking for jobs for extended periods of time or discovering the "bottomless pit" feeling of losing a job after years with the same com-

pany. Many have been forced to think about work, their skills and entrepreneurship differently. Part of the answer is learning to separate your concept of self from the work that you do and who you do it for. Wouldn't it be positive to develop that mind set

through an intentional activity rather than a crisis?

Conversations with young people making their homes in rural areas of Kansas led Marci Penner to explore these rural lifestyle choices among those under 40. She looked for a way to build a network among these individuals, which blossomed into the PowerUps. Pride in being "Rural by Choice" is the backbone of their connection. Many of us made the rural choice years ago and have invested in homes and businesses and have built the social network of the region. Many in this category are also philanthropic and the results are some unique and thriving community foundations and service organizations. The idea is not new, but giving it a name and raising awareness that it is a conscious choice rather than something that just happened is.

I was encouraged a few months ago when my 16-year old said "Why would anyone want to live anywhere else but Clyde. It's just perfect." In his mind, perfect meant not too big and not too small, but just right; cozy, but also full of unique sites and enterprising people and with ample opportunity to create a life. Opportunities, connections and wide-open spaces seemed to abound in his corner of Kansas and the glass seemed more than half full. I hope he and his generation have learned to value the good, to compensate for the not so great and to strive for improvement.

Can the region change the language, the culture and attitudes about occupation and location? Can it be changed enough to make an impact? Not quickly, but it takes small stitches to make a quilt.



Debra Ohlde, Clyde, is NCRPC Assistant Director.

PowerUps are 21-39 year olds who are rural by choice. The PowerUp movement, which is an extension of the Kansas Sampler Foundation, is about recognizing the value of the conscious decision to embrace and enhance the rural communities in which they live.

Erika Nelson, Lucas, is one of two PowerUp Liaisons to the Kansas Sampler Foundation. She chose to make Lucas her home without having any family connections there.

"There shouldn't be a negative stigma when you make the choice to return to your hometown or to somewhere that you love," Nelson says.

Jenny Russell, a PowerUp member and owner of JenRus Freelance, made the decision to move back with her husband to his hometown of Courtland.

"The PowerUp movement helps us to know that there are other rural young adults who believe like we do that rural Kansas is something worth supporting," Russell says. "It also helps us to be more confident in our decision to live rural when we know that there is a legion of like-minded people behind us."

Luke Mahin, who works for JenRus Freelance, says that creating opportunities to live and work in rural Kansas often takes creativity.

"Use your resources and talk to your family, friends and potential employers in that area and let them know you are serious about moving there," Mahin says. "Talking to people can stir up opportunity and more often than not those people are willing to help you get back."

To join the discussion or explore the idea, visit

[www.ruralbychoice.com](http://www.ruralbychoice.com).

### For More...

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship conducted a webinar on attracting alumni and young families to rural communities. The recording is available at: <http://heartlandcenter.adobeconnect.com/p3c7jep6q1/>. Questions may be emailed to Craig Schroeder at [craig@e2mail.org](mailto:craig@e2mail.org).



## business updates

# Chiropractor Returns to Hometown of Lincoln to Work, Purchase Clinic

Dr. Jake Gardner, a 2002 Lincoln High School graduate, returned to his hometown of Lincoln after completing training as a doctor of chiropractic in August 2010. Now, Gardner has purchased Lincoln's Workman Chiropractic Clinic and has changed the name of the practice to Gardner Chiropractic LLC.

Dr. Gardner, who is also a certified acupuncturist, began working as an independent contractor at Workman Chiropractic in January 2011. Dr. Pete Workman, who established the clinic in 1989, will continue to work in the practice one day per week to aid in the transition.

From inception, the practice included three days of operation in Lincoln and one day of operation in Salina. The Salina portion of the practice remains unchanged. Services include chiropractic care such as relief from back pain, arthritis pain, migraines and muscle pain. Other services include health supplements, needle and electric acupuncture, nutritional counseling through blood analysis and symptom surveys, therapeutic taping, decompression therapy, and hair removal.

The business' primary market is Lincoln County, with secondary

markets including Ellsworth, Ottawa, Russell and Saline Counties.

The business under Dr. Gardner will increase the operating hours to six days per week. The business purchase retained 2.75 FTE jobs.

Stanley Walker, Lincoln County Economic Development Foundation (LCEDF) Director, says it takes a special person to provide healthcare in a small rural community.

"With Dr. Gardner's ties to Lincoln County, we believe that his business will deliver a high level of personal care," Walker says. "In a vital attempt to keep pace with current and future demand for rural medical care alternatives in our community, this chiropractic practice represents a prime opportunity for Dr. Gardner to serve others and receive a respectable income."



Steve McReynolds, Citizens State Bank & Trust Co., is pictured at left with new business owner, Dr. Jake Gardner outside of the practice located at 102 E. Elm Street in Lincoln. (Courtesy Photo)

This purchase of an existing business was made possible with funding from the Citizens State Bank & Trust Co., the Four Rivers North Central Kansas Business Development Fund (NCKBDF), StartUp Kansas, and investment by the owner.

For more information about the financing programs used, contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Loan Director at 785-738-2218 or email [dpeters@nckcn.com](mailto:dpeters@nckcn.com).

