

# NCRPC News

A publication of the North Central Regional Planning Commission



Aug./Sept. 2012  
www.ncrpc.org

Serving Kansans since 1972

## NCKCN EMAIL SERVING MEMBERS, CUSTOMERS SINCE 1995

The North Central Kansas Community Network, Inc. (NCKCN) is still going strong — including its email services to members and customers.

The NCRPC created the NCKCN in 1995 in an effort to confront the digital divide and the growing competitive disadvantage the absence of affordable Internet access presented area businesses and educational institutions.

[@nckcn.com](mailto:@nckcn.com)™

The NCRPC created the regional Internet Service Provider (ISP) after multiple conversations with area service providers revealed no immediate future plans on their part to do the same. NCKCN, a 501(c)3 corporation, established a single Wide Area Network (WAN) that aggregated area-wide demand for Internet service and thereby introduced cost efficiencies associated with economies of scale.

Operating from that foundation, the NCRPC initiated development of a regional wireless network. According to Todd Tuttle, IT Systems Administrator for NCKCN Internet, service currently is provided at speeds 1Mbps and 6Mbps, depending on the

location and wireless technology generation.

One of the Internet technologies that NCKCN has provided since 1995 is email service.

“Email has become such an integral part of modern life that it bears mention of the scope to which NCKCN provides this service,” Tuttle says. “Since the humble beginnings of just a few members to now over 11,000 serviced members, email volume has grown to a phenomenal amount.”

NCKCN filters and processes on average more than 120,000 emails per day. Much of this volume is filtered spam and viruses that customers do not have to worry about or even see.

Hotmail, one of the pioneers in web-based email began around the same time as NCKCN. Microsoft acquired it in 1997 but recently announced plans to end its long-time webmail brand.

“Although not on the scale of something like Hotmail, we have even outlasted that entity and are committed to providing such services to the area into the future,” Tuttle says.

NCKCN has partnered with Cunningham Telephone & Cable Company, a local independent service provider, providing that company access to the Internet and Internet technologies. Cunningham provides broadband, full-duplex Internet service through its upgraded cable system in much of the North Central area. That system is directly connected to the NCKCN network, further extending

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~ Todd Tuttle,  
IT Systems  
Administrator,  
NCKCN



broadband service possibilities to very small communities of North Central Kansas not otherwise served by that same network.

The NCKCN effort was funded, in part, by the KDOC and the EDA. The initiative has won recognition including a Computerworld-Smithsonian Medal for innovative use of technology.

### 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:**

Janelle Dockendorf, Dickinson Co.

Steve Errebo, Lincoln Co.

Dwight Frost, Jewell Co.

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Ray McGavran, Ottawa Co.

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Frank Rytych, Republic Co.

David Thurlow, Clay Co.

## Rural Voices Contest Open to HS Seniors



High school seniors in North Central Kansas have a chance to compete for cash awards by participating in the 2012-2013 Rural Voices Contest.

Contestants may submit a written essay or a short video based on this year's contest theme of "Rural Kansas...A Place to Call Home."

The top entry in each category will be recognized with a cash award of \$850 and will be published on the *EyeonKansas* website. This marks the seventh year that the North Central Regional Planning Commission (NCRPC), Beloit, Kansas, has sponsored the contest.

Any senior in high school who lives in or attends a school in the 12-county NCRPC service area is eligible — including the counties of Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Marshall, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic, Saline and Washington. Home school students in this same area may also participate.

The deadline is November 15, 2012. All contestants must also complete an online registration form. For more information, visit [www.eyeonkansas.org](http://www.eyeonkansas.org) and click on the "RuralVoices" link.

## Social Media Provides Problem-Solving Platform

Social media is prevalent in today's society and is being used to help solve identified problems large and small, near and far.

Such problem-solving initiatives are being addressed through sites including [xprize.org](http://xprize.org), [catchafire.org](http://catchafire.org), [smallknot.com](http://smallknot.com) and others.

Even the State of Kansas has a program in place designed to assist small businesses and other organizations formed in Kansas to raise up to \$1 million during a 12-month period. The program, which is called Invest Kansas or IKE for short, states that any investments from any one purchaser are limited to \$1,000 unless the purchaser is an accredited investor as defined by Regulation D, Rule 501 of the Securities Act of 1933. This program is something that not all other states have.

The XPrize Foundation, with main offices in California, is an educational 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. It seeks to address the world's "grand" challenges by creating and managing large-scale, high-profile, incentivized prize competitions that stimulate investment in research and development in the categories of Education and Global Development, Energy and Environment, Exploration, and Life Sciences.

Catchafire is a for-profit company that seeks to match professionals who want to give their skills with nonprofits and social enterprises that need their help. The professionals and organizations are matched based on a variety of characteristics including skills, interests, and time

Examples of Websites Focused on Addressing Selective Issues:

[www.xprize.org](http://www.xprize.org)

Incentivized prize competitions to stimulate investment in research and development to solve an identified problem.

[www.catchafire.org](http://www.catchafire.org)

Creates teams to solve identified problems while matching professionals who want to give their skills with nonprofits that need help.

[smallknot.com](http://smallknot.com)

Crowd-funding site to spark investment in independent businesses that are lacking capital for small purchases.

[www.ksc.ks.gov/index.aspx?NID=121](http://www.ksc.ks.gov/index.aspx?NID=121) (Invest Kansas—IKE)

An exemption that allows Kansans to raise up to \$1 Million for individual businesses and/or projects.

availability. Primary locations served at this time include Greater New York City, Greater Boston, and Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro, NC, with some skill sets being feasible to offer nationwide.

Smallknot is considered a crowd-funding website to help independent businesses access capital. Individuals invest in small community businesses in exchange for goods, services, special perks and benefits. Fundraising campaign goals are generally between \$2,000 and \$10,000. It is primarily in New York now, but is expanding to cities nationwide.

## looking ahead : Dates, Meetings, and Deadlines

### Thursday, September 27, 2012

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

### Tuesday, October 23, 2012

NCRPC Banquet  
Webster Conference Center, Salina  
RSVP to NCRPC by Friday, October 15

### Thursday, November 15, 2012

Rural Voices Youth Contest Deadline  
for High School Seniors in NC Kansas

### Thursday, November 29 OR Thursday, December 6, 2012

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

Your ideas are welcome! Send your event, story idea or newsletter suggestions to Lori Thielen at [lthielen@nckcn.com](mailto:lthielen@nckcn.com).

## Technical Education Has Valuable Role in Economy

## Redefining Retirement Program Offered by KU

Schools are underway and enthusiasm for learning is back in our communities. New programming options exist thanks to the fostering efforts of the Kansas Legislature, technical colleges and high schools in the region. School districts such as Salina, Beloit and Concordia now offer certain specialized courses to students eager to have hands-on training.

The pool of workers with technical skills is not keeping up with demand. Fewer high school graduates are pursuing trade courses and even fewer students grow up learning mechanical skills at home or on the farm.

Unemployment in North Central Kansas is half the United States average. Many economists point out the strong demand for persons with a specialized two-year degree from technical colleges or community colleges. Career pathways related to

electrical, automotive repair, diesel mechanics, welding, computer-aided design, and machining are being sought by employers looking to bolster their operations, which in turn aids our rural economies.



Doug McKinney is NCRPC Executive Director.

It will take community leaders, secondary educators and those in the homes of our youth to speak positively about the solid opportunities to work with ones hands to build and repair, manufacture and contribute. Nationally in 2010, less than half of all persons seeking a bachelor's degree will achieve such.

So, as campuses are busy again and many of us cheer students on the playing field and in the classroom, let's encourage students to consider the other choices for higher learning that exist at institutions such as Salina Tech, Cloud County, and NCK Tech. Many of your local employers will appreciate the knowledge garnered by such well-trained candidates.

The University of Kansas School of Business has launched a new program designed to keep Kansas businesses open.

The Redefining Retirement program — nicknamed RedTire — will act as a matchmaker between business owners looking to exit and qualified graduates of a Kansas Regents institution. The program is aimed at preventing rural businesses from closing because an owner can't find a successor or buyer.

The program does have the threshold requirements that the business must have annual sales of \$750,000 or more and the owner must also be willing to mentor the new owner for three years.

"Nearly 13,000 businesses in Kansas have owners who plan to retire in five years but do not have succession plans in place."

~ Wally Meyer, a RedTire director and the director of entrepreneurship programs for the KU School of Business

RedTire seeks to assemble teams of graduates to provide the multidisciplinary capabilities that successfully managed companies require. For example, RedTire would team a pharmacy student and an MBA student to work together on purchasing a pharmacy. Ownership teams will be built across the core industries of business, pharmacy, medicine and agriculture.

In addition to attempting to help recent graduates, the RedTire program could dovetail with other state programs, including the Rural Opportunity Zone Program.

The RedTire program has been in the planning stages since 2009. Services are free. For details or to apply for services, visit [www.redtire.org](http://www.redtire.org).

*Information courtesy of KU News Service.*

## Make Plans to Attend NCRPC Banquet

The NCRPC will celebrate 40 years of service to North Central Kansas during its bi-annual banquet on Tuesday, October 23 in Salina.

The banquet will be at the Webster Conference Center, located at 2601 North Ohio Street, just north of the I-70 exit for Ohio Street.

A social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the keynote address immediately following dinner.

Reservations are required and may be made by calling the NCRPC at 785-738-2218 or emailing [nrcpc@nckcn.com](mailto:nrcpc@nckcn.com) by October 15.



Tickets are \$15 per person. To download the registration form, visit [www.nrcpc.org/news/upcoming/BanquetForm.pdf](http://www.nrcpc.org/news/upcoming/BanquetForm.pdf).

The NCRPC was formed in 1972 with the authority to assist member governmental units as a planning board, as project planning staff and as a channel for federal or state program delivery to the local level.

The NCRPC was organized with eight counties. Today, it serves 12 counties and 83 member cities in the primary region of North Central Kansas.

## business updates

# Belleville Gym Purchased, New Owners Offer Family Oriented Fitness Center

Republic County residents now have expanded fitness options available in Belleville. Shannon and Kendra Short purchased an existing fitness facility, The Gym, and renamed the business B Defined Fitness, LLC. The Short's officially opened their new business on January 1, 2012.

The fitness center offers a weight lifting/cardio room, locker rooms with showers, two full-size racquetball courts and a multi-purpose work-out room in which organized instructional classes, including Zumba, are held. Personal training also is offered at the center.

The Short's take pride in providing a family oriented fitness center to the local community.

"We help emphasize family fitness by offering extremely competitive rates for families to join," Shannon says. "Our fitness classes are open to all ages and we encourage family members to work out with each other."

The Gym was built in 1993 north of the hospital in Belleville. The Short's began remodeling the facility immediately after their purchase and

say they are continually making improvements.

"The purchase of The Gym by B Defined Fitness has turned an aging business into a once again thriving business for Republic County," Linda Holl, Republic County Commissioner, says.

Kendra, a native of Belleville, opened a dance studio called The Turning Pointe, LLC in 2010. That business is housed in the top story of the fitness center.

"The two businesses compliment each other really well and help us to provide the atmosphere for a family fitness center," Shannon says. "We love seeing parents bring their dancers to dance class and then be able to utilize the fitness center while their child is dancing."

Kendra has a bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from the University of Kansas. Shannon is a pharmacist in the region.



B Defined Fitness, LLC is located at 2310 G Street in Belleville.



The center is open daily from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. For more, visit the B Defined Fitness Facebook page.

This project was made possible with funding from the owners, Astra Bank, the Republic County Development Revolving Loan Fund, and the Four Rivers Down Payment Assistance Program.

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

[www.ncrpc.org](http://www.ncrpc.org)

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