

TWO HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WIN RURAL VOICES CONTEST

Two high school seniors in North Central Kansas have won the Rural Voices Youth Contest and have been named recipients of the John R. Cyr Rural Voices Award. Katy Winkel, a senior at Beloit Junior/Senior High School, submitted the first place essay and won \$850. Larissa Liggett, a senior at Lincoln Junior/Senior High School, submitted the second place essay and won \$750. Both entries also are published on the [Eye on Kansas Online Magazine](#), which is a NCRPC sister site.

This is the seventh year the NCRPC has sponsored the contest. The awards are named in honor of John Cyr who served for 22 years as the NCRPC Executive Director.

Students eligible to participate in the contest included any senior in high school living in and/or attending a public or private high school within the 12 county NCRPC service area – Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Marshall, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic, Saline, and Washington. Home school students in this same area were also invited to participate. Students could enter either an original essay or video.

“We received a record number of written entries this year so competition in that category was

especially tough,” Lori Thielen, NCRPC Communications Specialist, says.

Thielen says the panel of six judges from across the region were impressed by the thought that many of the youth put into their entries.

The contest theme, which varies each year, was “Rural Kansas...A Place to Call Home.”

Winkel focused much of her essay on the Rural Opportunities Zone (ROZ) program offered through the Kansas Department of Commerce.

“Writing this essay made me think about my future and the possibility of returning to rural Kansas to make a living and raise a family,” Winkel says. “The ROZ program provides an incentive for young people to do that. I commend the Mitchell County Commissioners for recently approving additional funding for the program in our area.”

Liggett agreed that the process of writing the essay gave her opportunity to reflect on her rural Kansas experience.

2012-2013 Rural Voices Contest Winners



Katy Winkel



Larissa Liggett

“Writing about rural Kansas gave me a chance to reflect on the reasons why I love living in a rural community. I felt that by recognizing what draws me to Kansas, I could better convince others to make rural Kansas their home,” Liggett says. “This essay gave me the opportunity to research and discover the unlimited potential that rural areas hold.”

Winkel plans to attend the University of Kansas to major in Pharmacy. Liggett plans to attend a university in Kansas and major in Finance.

Details for the 2013-2014 contest will be announced this fall. To view this year’s top entries or to learn more about the contest, visit www.eyeonkansas.org/ruralvoices.

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NCRPC Executive Board Welcomes Brumbaugh

Karen Brumbaugh joined the NCRPC Executive Board in 2013 after being elected to the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners.



Karen Brumbaugh

She worked for more than 20 years with Tony's Pizza Service in Salina, spending the last 12

years in the Human Resources Department. She currently is a substitute teacher. Karen received an associate's degree in business management from Cloud County Community College.

In addition to her role as Commissioner, Karen is a Community Emergency Response (CERT) team member. The CERT Program educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills so that CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. She also volunteers with North Central Kansas American Red Cross and the Good Samaritan Center in Minneapolis.

Dockendorf Recognized for Service to NCRPC



Outgoing NCRPC Executive Board member Janelle Dockendorf was recognized at the January 31 board meeting for her service to the organization. Pictured at left is Board Chairman Tim Vandall presenting a certificate to Dockendorf. Janelle has served on the NCRPC Board as a representative of Dickinson County since 2011. She is the Dickinson County Budget Director and Economic Development Coordinator. We wish to thank Janelle for her time and dedication to serving North Central Kansas.

CDBG Grants Awarded Across the Region

Several communities in North Central Kansas will be receiving funds to help with a variety of improvement projects. The funds will come from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce.

To be awarded funds, local government units must meet at least one of three program objectives: benefit low and moderate-income persons, prevent or eliminate slums and blight, or resolve an urgent need where local resources are not available to do so.

The City of Cawker City will receive \$384,700 to rehabilitate 11 homes and demolish five dilapidated units. Other funds will match this grant with \$11,000.

The City of Jewell will receive \$332,571 to remove and replace concrete curb and gutter in approximately 11 blocks and reconstruct pavement. The Transportation Revolving Fund will provide \$272,104 in matching funds.

Lincoln County will receive \$164,000 to remove and replace the existing stone drainage structures on a 10-mile stretch. New culverts and place embankment will be done. The Transportation Revolving Fund will provide \$340,300 in matching funds.

The City of Mankato will receive \$400,000 to rehabilitate nine homes and four apartments and demolish eight dilapidated units. Other funds will match this grant with \$44,500.

Washington County will receive \$296,000 to demolish and replace six bridges. The county will provide local funds of \$318,000 and \$134,000 in county labor to the project.

The City of Wilson will receive \$389,900 to rehabilitate 12 homes and demolish one dilapidated unit. Other funds will match this grant with \$7,000.

It is time to plan for FY 2014 CDBG Annual Competition Rounds. Contact the NCRPC for project planning assistance. CDBG Grants are available in the categories

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looking ahead : Meetings, Deadlines, and More

Thursday, March 28, 2013
Executive Board Meeting
Beloit Main Office, 2 p.m.

Wed. April 17 & Thurs., April 18
Kansas Department of Commerce
CDBG 2014 Annual Workshop
Hutchinson, KS (Ramada Hotel)

Thursday, April 25, 2013
Executive Board Field Trip
Ellsworth, KS

Thursday, May 30, 2013
Executive Board Meeting
Beloit Main Office, 2 p.m.



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Economic Outlook Seems Brighter for NC Kansas

North Central Kansans, from my windshield perspective economic conditions in Kansas and particularly in this region appear to have a generally bright outlook. How does it appear to you? Yes, the wind supply chain and transportation sectors face uncertainties given pending legislative actions. But, considering what south central Kansas is experiencing with the Boeing departure and a plan to close one of the largest postal decoding facilities in Wichita, circumstances up north seem promising.



Doug McKinney is NCRPC Executive Director.

Kansas Department of Agriculture indicates agricultural exports are still rising as demand remains strong. Moisture, albeit just above normal for this time of year, has fallen on parched soils throughout the state. Additionally, goods produced in many of our counties are still strongly sought. The national hiccup in Gross Domestic Product expansion late in 2012 does not appear to be reflected as much in much of Kansas. Winter weather-related disruptions in early 2013 have only slightly hampered deliveries and some consumption. In this region, purchases by households and businesses grew during November and December, with sales tax receipts rising slightly as a result. Such information suggests that economic growth is a prevailing theme.

Consistent with the tempo of economic growth, the labor market has steadily improved. Unemploy-

ment in this region is down to levels not seen since 2008. Only Saline County has an unemployment rate above five percent, at 5.1. Several counties are near three percent now. More representative of labor force circumstances is the job vacancy rate. It is calculated for the vast north central, northwest and southwest portions of the state. The 2012 level is 3.7 percent, which compares favorably with a 3.5 percent rate back in 2008. However, the number of job vacancies in this same area are up 17 percent since 2008. The rate is nearly double since 2011. No other labor force area in Kansas has seen more than a 3 percent annual increase in job vacancies in recent data analyses. You can surmise employers are expanding, or simply trying to fill voids left from employee departures.

Unfortunately, the very recent increase in fuel prices is once again harming family budgets, governmental services and business pocket-books. However, overall inflation remains low for the time being.

Opportunities exist for the vast central and western portions of Kansas. The NCRPC will continue to assist with community betterment, business developments and provide technological support services so the region is even brighter in the future. Take a moment to reflect. What can each of us do to assist filling the voids to help our communities and take advantage of the opportunities that exist?

shop is April 17-18 in Hutchinson at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Center. The workshop is free but advance registration is required. Call 785-296-3004 to register by April 10.

In celebration of this year's Kansas Day on January 29, the Kansas Department of Agriculture launched its newly revised trademark program for Kansas agricultural companies. The program's purpose is to identify and make available Kansas grown, raised and processed products to consumers while educating and enhancing business opportunities for Kansas companies.

First developed by State Statute



FROM THE LAND OF
KANSAS

A look at the new program logo.

in the late 1980s so that Kansas would have a "brand," it has evolved over the years. In the '80s through the early 2000s the program was known as *From*

the Land of Kansas. This was changed to *Simply Kansas* when it moved from the Department of Agriculture over to Commerce in 2005. The program is back into the Kansas Department of Agriculture. After researching the past two years, it has been decided to go back to the original name of *From the Land of Kansas*.

The program offers membership in the following categories: Grower/Producer, Value-Added Agriculture (non-food products), Restaurant, Manufacturer/Processor, and Agritourism. Partners of *From the Land of Kansas* may also be recognized including Farmers Markets and Retailers. By registering, *From the Land of Kansas* partners will receive authorization to use the trademark program logo in their promotional materials and be featured on the program website.

Companies interested in applying may contact Becky Sullivan, state trademark program coordinator, at 785-296-6080 or Becky.Sullivan@kda.ks.gov. A new website will launch in late spring. (www.fromthelandofkansas.com)

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of Community Improvement, Housing, Economic Development, Urgent Need and KAN STEP. The Annual CDBG Application Work-

business updates

Bush's Market in Solomon Receives Loan to Help With Energy Efficiency Upgrades

When Kenny and Ann Bush purchased Bush's Market from Kenny's parents in 2010, they knew some energy efficiency upgrades would need to be made to the grocery store with roots in Solomon dating back to 1950.

The upgrades began with the installation of a new 26-foot 10-door freezer in November 2012. The new unit replaced a partial aisle of freezers/compressors.

It is estimated the new freezer unit will save more than \$6,000 per year in energy costs. In addition to the potential energy cost savings, Ann says other benefits include improved aesthetics, more product space, and receiving great feedback from store customers.

"It's been fun for our frozen foods department manager to stock this new unit because there is so much more room and he's been able to bring in new products," Ann says.

The Bush's would like to continue making more energy efficiency improvements.

"We have more freezers that we'd like to replace but they are newer so not as critical," Ann says. "Our next

goal is to replace the dairy case with a new energy efficient unit."

The trend for dairy cases is to have closed units to improve energy efficiency. The dairy case at Bush's Market is an older open style.

In addition to groceries, the store offers "to-go" lunches Monday through Friday, fresh-cut and special order meats, homemade pork sausage and sandwich spread, a variety of smoked meats on Fridays, custom order party trays, floral arrangements, gift baskets, and catered lunches for business meetings. The store employs 13 including Kenny and Ann.

"I love being at the store," Ann says. "It gives me an opportunity to visit with customers, many of which I have known for years."

The 2010 business purchase was made possible with funding from Solomon State Bank, North Central



Kenny Bush, owner of Bush's Market, is pictured in front of the new energy efficient freezer unit at his grocery store. Bush's Market is located along U.S. Highway 40 in Solomon.

Regional Planning Commission Revolving Loan Fund, a StartUp Kansas Loan, and investment by the owners. The energy efficient upgrade was made possible with funding from the Solomon State Bank/Four Rivers NCK Business Development Fund Loan Pool.

For more information about the financing programs used contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Finance Director, at 785-738-2218 or by email at dpeters@nckcn.com.

