



## COMMUNITIES ABLE TO HELP THEMSELVES WITH KAN STEP

Many small communities lack the financial resources to be able to address water, sewer and public building needs on their own. The Kansas Small Towns Environment Program (KAN STEP) is designed to help solve those needs through self help.

The KAN STEP program is administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Eligible applicants are cities with a population less than 2,500 or counties on behalf of water or fire districts. The program is competitive and applications are accepted twice a year — in August and February. The maximum grant amount is \$300,000 or \$2,000 per beneficiary. Funding is targeted to professional services and materials, while volunteers provide labor and donate equipment.

The first KAN STEP project was in North Central Kansas in Formoso. As of April, the program has now funded 87 projects totaling more than \$22 million. In addition, volunteers have donated more than \$17 million in labor and other services.

Don Slater, Morrowville, was a project leader or “sparkplug” for the city’s KAN STEP project for water-line replacement.

“The KAN STEP program was great for us because we had the vol-

unteers but not the money,” Slater says. “It all went together pretty fast.”

Construction began in April 2013 and the project was completed in July 2013.

The city even received assistance from the Manhattan Konza Rotary Club, whose members came to volunteer a couple of weekends and donated \$4,000 as part of its Water Matters Day recognition.

Slater says the Kansas Rural Water Association (KRWA), which provides technical assistance for KAN STEP projects, was a great help.

“KRWA came and helped us set things up and then came when we were done to get everything working properly,” Slater says.

The City of Enterprise is currently working on its third KAN STEP project. Paul Froelich has been a sparkplug for all three projects.

“In a small town we don’t have a huge tax base to depend on so this has allowed us to do projects that we never would have been able to do on our own,” Froelich says.

The city’s first KAN STEP was a water project in 2003. A second KAN STEP project, completed in 2007, was a combination building to house a library, fire station, and



Fire hydrants are awaiting installation in Enterprise as part of its recent KAN STEP project.

Courtesy Photo/KRWA

meeting room. Construction began in March on its newest KAN STEP — another water project.

“We’ve had an extremely successful track record with volunteers working on our projects,” Froelich says. “We have a very diverse group of people helping and we’ve made friendships out of working together on these volunteer projects.”

The community has celebrated completion of each project with a banquet to thank the volunteers. More than 200 attended the last one.

Mandy Fincham, NCRPC Community Development Specialist, encourages communities to consider the KAN STEP program.

“Contact us about specific needs and we can attend a meeting or talk you through the process,” Fincham says. “The whole community can get involved with KAN STEP.”

### Leadership : NCRPC Executive Board

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## Housing Resources, Programs Available

The need for affordable, quality housing is universal for many rural communities. Two resources are available that may help cities and counties develop housing and infrastructure.



First, the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC) is again offering the Moderate Income Housing (MIH) Program.

Many Kansas communities and employers have stressed a growing need for affordable moderate income housing (MIH), defined as income generally between 60 and 150% of HUD's State Non-Metro Area Medium Income. Funds from the MIH Program may be used for infrastructure necessary to support housing or actual housing development. Applicants may request up to \$400,000 in the form of grants or loans. The deadline to submit proposals is September 5, 2014. For more information, contact the NCRPC office or visit the KHRC website at

[www.kshousingcorp.org/moderate-income-housing.aspx](http://www.kshousingcorp.org/moderate-income-housing.aspx).

Second, free housing data reports are available as part of a Kansas Housing Research Project sponsored by the Kansas Rural Housing Conference. An 84-page report using Census housing data has been created for every city and county in Kansas. To view the reports, visit [kansasruralhousing.com/reports.html](http://kansasruralhousing.com/reports.html).

## NCRPC Executive Board Welcomes Ouellette

Gary Ouellette joined the NCRPC Executive Board of Directors in 2013 after being elected to the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

Gary is a retired farmer and spent 20 years in the civil service and 20 years in the military, retiring as the assistant fire chief at Fort Riley and as a staff sergeant from the U.S. Army Reserves. Gary serves on the Linn American Legion Board, is a member of Linn's Booster Club and is a Grand Knight in the Knights of Columbus.



Gary Ouellette

He has an associate degree from Cloud County Community College and has been a part-time instructor for the University of Kansas Fire Service

Program. He enjoys golf, fishing, hunting and traveling.

## Strategic Doing Topic of Recent Workshop

Building collaborations and moving ideas into action are important for most civic groups.

The Strategic Doing framework, designed by the Purdue Center for Regional Development, is intended to help translate thinking into action when implementing strategy. NCRPC staff attended a workshop on Strategic Doing in May at Bethel College. The Kansas Association of Regional Development Organizations (KARDO) sponsored the event.

"Strategic planning is not a one-time event," Doug McKinney, NCRPC Executive Director, says. "It has to be ongoing."

One aspect of the Strategic Doing concept is the idea of a 30/30.

### The 4 questions of Strategic Doing



Graphic Provided Courtesy of Purdue Center for Regional Development

"They encourage a 30/30, which is basically thinking about what have you done in the past 30 days and what do you plan to do in the next 30

*(Continued on page 3)*

## looking ahead : Meetings, Deadlines, and More

### Thursday, July 24, 2014

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

### Thursday, August 28, 2014

NCRPC Executive Board Meeting  
Ottawa County Courthouse, 2 p.m.

### FY 2015 CDBG Grant Deadlines

Housing — Aug. 29, 2014  
Water and Sewer — Sept. 30, 2014  
Community Facilities — Nov. 3, 2014  
KAN STEP — Aug. 15, 2014  
KAN STEP — Feb. 16, 2015  
Economic Development — Open Window Jan. 1-Dec. 10, 2014



**Contact Us:**  
**North Central Regional  
Planning Commission (NCRPC)**

109 N. Mill Street • PO Box 565  
Beloit, KS 67420 • 785-738-2218  
[www.ncrpc.org](http://www.ncrpc.org)

Send newsletter suggestions to  
[lthielen@nckcn.com](mailto:lthielen@nckcn.com).

I begin many mornings by glancing at headlines from several on-line business journals from around the Midwest. They usually feature updates from major area employers and a few generic articles about business that are boiler-plate produced for use around the country.

Recently one such article contained a wonderful summary of key skills we all need to master in our work life. The author placed specific emphasis on their importance in



Debra Ohlde is NCRPC Assistant Director.

the relatively small office environment, which is the environment many of us find ourselves in every day. Although the article was targeting the for-profit sector, I think it is very transferable to the government or non-profit sector as well.

What follows is a quick look at those key skills and my take on their importance.

### Delegation

When we spend time wearing many hats in a small town or office, it is easy to overlook that there may be someone better able to do a task or that the entire group would be better served if tasks were

divided differently. Effectively delegating tasks to those best able to handle them is key. So is being a good delegator. That includes checking back to see if progress is occurring, if the task needs further clarification, or if the individual may need some training or support items to excel in their new role. Delegation is not a synonym for abandonment! Very few volunteers will stick with you if they feel something has been dumped in their lap.

### Communication

Restating expectations, fully disclosing everything about a project or new client, and encouraging a co-worker to reiterate the goals going forward all help to make sure everyone understands. We are all guilty of misinterpreting what someone said or thinking we communicated very clearly only to find out it sounded like a foreign language to the recipient. Creating an environment where asking questions for clarification and stating a difference of opinion is welcomed helps overcome those obstacles. Clear communication saves valuable time for everyone.

### Accountability & Reliability

These two are closely tied. Admitting when you were wrong and doing what you say you will were probably things you heard from your mom when you were a child. If it was important to mom, it is probably im-

portant to your co-workers, fellow board members and neighbors as well. Adults who own mistakes and can be counted on are respected elected officials and valuable members of volunteer efforts. Putting these skills to work builds trust among groups and help to accelerate projects forward because those involved feel confidence in the rest of the team.

### Strategic Focus

This skill resonated with me the most and led me to make a note to use it for my next column. Leadership teams in companies and many of us in our community roles tend to spend resources and mental energy analyzing risks associated with choices, but often fail to analyze the risk of simply doing nothing and battling to maintain the status quo. Failing to recognize the threat of not making adjustments and innovating is very risky behavior too. This skill is of utmost importance in our communities every day. The need to make progress and improvement is never ending. Making good choices about where, when, and how to allocate scarce resources deserves concerted effort and forethought.

I encourage you to challenge your community leadership, your business partners, and your volunteer board to model the above behavior and to always demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning.

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days,” Deb Ohlde, NCRPC Assistant Director, says. “To me what they are trying to emphasize is a more nimble strategic planning process.”

The workshop facilitator was Ed Morrison of Purdue University. The next step in introducing the concept is for KARDO to repeat this workshop in various regions around the

state. KARDO has applied for funding from USDA Rural Development.

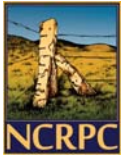
The Strategic Doing model is a fluid process that places less emphasis on the formal procedure of traditional strategic planning.

“During the workshop they stressed that we should think about what assets we bring to the table and what we can do with the assets that

we have using our own spheres of influence,” Ohlde says. “This may mean spending less time focusing on who is not at the table.”

The overall concept is simply thinking about strategic planning a little differently. For more information, visit [www.pcrd.purdue.edu/What\\_We\\_Do/SD/](http://www.pcrd.purdue.edu/What_We_Do/SD/) or stay tuned for updates in a future newsletter.





## North Central Regional Planning Commission

109 N. Mill, PO Box 565  
Beloit, KS 67420  
785.738.2218  
www.ncrpc.org

### business updates

A long-time Wilson business is now under new ownership. Local residents Les and Erin Vopat recently purchased Wilson Wine & Spirits.

The business offers wine, liquor, and beer products and primarily serves Wilson, the Wilson Lake area, and Ellsworth County. The Vopat's expanded the operating hours since their purchase and the store is now open daily, making it the closest liquor store from Wilson Lake that is open on Sundays.

"The customers are very appreciative of the Sunday sales including local customers and the people traveling to the lake and their summer homes," Les says.

The couple previously owned and operated a business in Kanopolis, but decided to sell it when the opportunity to purchase Wilson Wine &

### Wilson Business Under New Ownership

Spirits presented itself. The Vopat's says they appreciate no longer having the expense of traveling 40 miles a day.

"Purchasing this business appeared to be a good investment with the lake close by and competitors not being open on Sundays or holidays for many miles around," Erin says.

The couple's son, Dustin, works at the business as needed. The new owners say ordering is a learning process that will take time to establish a known pattern, but they are able to special order for customers.

"Our customers have been really nice," Les says. "It's nice to meet new people and see local citizens supporting the business."



Wilson Wine & Spirits is located at 521 27th Street, Wilson.

The project was made possible with funding from the First Bank Kansas, Smoky Hill Development Corporation, NCRPC Revolving Loan Fund, Four Rivers NCKBDF, and investment by the owners.

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