

# NCRPC NEWS

A publication of the North Central Regional Planning Commission

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www.ncrpc.org

## Nuisance Abatement Program to Begin

Every community desires to be an inviting place to live. The NCRPC is rolling out a new pilot Nuisance Abatement Program that will assist communities struggling to deal with “nuisance” properties that are unsafe or not in compliance with ordinances.

Common nuisances may include unlicensed cars; uncontrolled weeds, grass, trees, and bushes; houses with broken windows or doors; outbuildings in disrepair; vacant houses; and household garbage and other waste. In addition to these items being an eyesore for a community, many are also a threat to the health and safety of its citizens.

The new Nuisance Abatement Program is being modeled after the program developed by the West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD), which has been utilized by several different communities and agencies across Nebraska. Superior, Nebraska, is one example of a community that has utilized the program multiple years. NCRPC Executive Director Doug McKinney first learned about the Nuisance Abatement Program when he did an Economic Development Administration regional organization “peer review” in Nebraska.

While some larger communities have code enforcement officers, the majority of communities in the NCRPC region do not.

“It is understood that a number of communities in the region struggle with nuisances,” McKinney says.

“This program is a means for communities to have access to this type of service on a contractual basis without the full staffing costs associated with such.”

The program allows communities to use NCRPC for third party assessment and oversight.

“This alleviates any bias,” NCRPC Housing Director Carol Torkelson says. “All properties are treated alike and assessed based on the adopted ordinance regarding what is considered a nuisance.”

In addition to helping communities in the region clean up, Torkelson says the program offers another benefit. “It will demonstrate a community’s willingness to help themselves, which is especially important when applying for funding for infrastructure or housing projects,” Torkelson says.

Torkelson says for a community to participate, it must adopt a comprehensive Nuisance Abatement Ordinance, which is available from NCRPC, and commit to three things.

“Full buy-in by all members of the city council; financial commitment for administrative fees and nuisance removal; and patience and perseverance are all key,” Torkelson says. “It doesn’t happen overnight.”

The NCRPC plans to partner with a community for the first project in 2018. Any interested community may contact Carol Torkelson at 785-738-2218 or [ctorkelson@nckcn.com](mailto:ctorkelson@nckcn.com) to express interest or request a presentation at a council meeting. ■

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## ABOUT US

### Our Mission

Advancing rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.

### Our Vision

By 2024, communities in rural Kansas will favor choices that embrace innovation, increase prosperity and demonstrate resilience.

### Contact Us

109 N. Mill, PO Box 565  
Beloit, KS 67420  
785-738-2218  
Email: [ncrpc@nckcn.com](mailto:ncrpc@nckcn.com)

### Visit Us on the Web

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# Summer Learning Programs an Opportunity to Engage Youth

I read recently in the Washington County News that school need not be closed for the summer. Kids can learn all year around, just in different forms in different seasons. Some planned and unique learning has been taking place with youth in Hanover, Linn and Washington this summer with green thumbs being encouraged, talents in the arts explored, and civic concepts raised. Another place where youth are being engaged and challenged is in the Solomon Valley.

Last December the Kansas Department of Education invited school districts and friends to Topeka for a forum featuring Pine Bush, New York, and their approach to career engagement and re-attraction of

## VIEWPOINT



Doug McKinney has been NCRPC Executive Director since 2008.

were developed in subsequent months discussing a pilot summertime career exploration and youth leadership program.

young persons. Jeff Travis of USD 273, Eric Burks of NCK Tech, Heather Hartman of Mitchell County Community Development and yours truly attended and then pondered the what-ifs upon traveling home. Strategies

The result was a Career Exploration and Leadership Program available to incoming 7-9<sup>th</sup> grade students for nine days over the course of three weeks in June. Students learned how communities work, play and survive in rural Kansas. They explored applied agriculture, wildlife biology, food creativity, health care, business technology, graphic design, worldwide advertising, civic leadership, robotics, as well as entrepreneurship. Their heads were not in books or computers, but examining life via microscopes and safety glasses while their hands were all over tools of the various trades they encountered.

**(Continued on page 3)**

# Community Focuses Efforts on Clean-up, Code Enforcement

When the City of Sylvan Grove's application for a housing grant through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program was denied funding two years ago, the city decided to take a step back and evaluate.

Officials from the Kansas Department of Commerce visited the community and recommended cleaning up and enforcing code violations before applying again. Sylvan Grove City Clerk Jennifer Huehl says the city has since updated its ordinances, hired a part-time code enforcement officer, and has had successful community clean-up days—and it is all making an impact.

“There has been an education process as the officer talks to people about a problem and why it matters,”



More than 30 volunteers participated in a community clean-up day in Sylvan Grove on April 26 and removed 17 tons of tires, 11 tons of metal and multiple loads of limbs and yard waste.

Huehl says. “Initially some were upset when the city started this process, but then people started seeing the impact it was making in their community. There has been a trickledown effect.”

Along with code enforcement, the city received a Community Clean-Up Grant through the Post Rock Community Foundation with funds from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation. The grant helped pay for

removal of tires, equipment such as chainsaws, safety gear, food, fuel and landfill fees. Huehl says about 38 volunteers participated in the community clean-up day in April—including high school students and city council members who were able to take off work.

“It made a big impact overall that we went out and helped people,” Huehl says. “I think we forget that some people may not have a vehicle or the physical ability to do the clean up themselves, so this day was especially helpful for that.”

The community clean-up day resulted in the removal of 17 tons of tires, 11 tons of metal and multiple loads of limbs and yard waste.

“The outside perspective received at the city's housing site visit two years ago helped create awareness and the momentum has continued,” NCRPC Housing Director Carol Torkelson says. “The community has worked really hard and is a great example of what can be done.” ■

# NC Homeland Security Council Intruderology Training Video Available to Kansas Schools

A NC Kansas Homeland Security Council Intruderology Training video developed for training purposes in K-12 schools is available for use within Kansas. Intruderology is defined as the science of active shooter/violent intruder prevention and survival. Funding for the project came from the Homeland Security Program.

The video series uses professional trainers to help staff at K-12 schools prepare and think about possible scenarios. The original training was recorded in Chapman in 2015 and edited into three, approximately one-hour training segments.

Chancy Smith, Dickinson County Emergency Management Director, says the training is unique because local first responders must participate when the training is being viewed by school staff.

“This can be really beneficial,” Smith says. “The people who would respond are sitting at the training.”

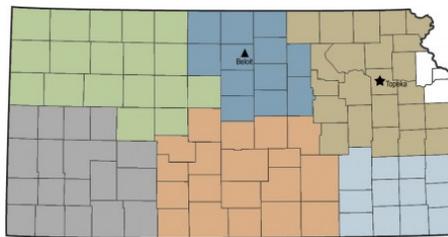
## Summer Learning

(Continued from page 2)

This was not a passive program. NCRPC supported this with a small gift from its modest tax credit initiative. Other support came through the school district, technical college and donations such as the local Rotary Club. A big round of applause is well deserved for student guides Cris Adams and Stephanie Litton of USD 273.

Heather Hartman, Mitchell County Community Development Director, says it was a great first year.

“I know my measure of success was hearing from several students ‘Wow, I didn’t know I could do this job here,’ and ‘I just figured out what I want to do when I grow up,’” Hartman says.



The Intruderology Training Video was a project of the North Central Kansas Homeland Security Council, which is highlighted in dark blue on the map.

Sherry Angell, NCRPC Homeland Security Program Coordinator, says the project has been well received.

“The schools that have used the training have learned from it,” Angell says. “It’s eye opening.”

A total of 15 DVDs are available. To learn more about using the training video, contact Smith at 785-263-3608.

The NCRPC acts as the Fiscal Agent for six of the seven designated Homeland Security Regions in Kansas, including North Central. ■

Students are eager to explore and develop their loyalties to place. Costs need not be elaborate. NCRPC is ready and able to help you pilot a similar project in 2018. Let’s engage and try to retain bright young minds and their innovative interests.



Touring AGCO’s Beloit facility was one of the many experiences that participants had during the Career Exploration and Leadership Program in June.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Heritage Trust Fund Grants Available

Applications for the 2018 Heritage Trust Fund (HTF) grant round are now available. The HTF program, administered by the Kansas Historical Society, provides matching funds for the preservation of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the Register of Historic Kansas Places. The maximum grant award for each project is \$90,000 and must be matched by the grant recipient.

A grant workshop will be Tuesday, July 18 in Lincoln at the Finch Theatre from 1-3 pm. For more information, contact the NCRPC or visit [www.kshs.org/p/heritage-trust-fund-workshops/14609](http://www.kshs.org/p/heritage-trust-fund-workshops/14609). The next application deadline is November 1, 2017. ■

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Thursday, July 27, 2017

NCRPC Executive Board Meeting  
Emergency Services Building,  
Miltonvale, KS, 2 p.m.

### Thursday, August 31, 2017

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

### FY 2018 CDBG Funding Deadlines

Housing - Aug. 31, 2017  
Water and Sewer - Sept. 29, 2017  
Community Facilities - Nov. 1, 2017  
Commercial Rehabilitation -  
Open from Jan. 1-Dec. 2, 2017  
Economic Development -  
Open from Jan 1-Dec. 10, 2017

### More on the web »

Events: [www.ncrpc.org/news/events](http://www.ncrpc.org/news/events)  
Funding sources and deadlines:  
[www.ncrpc.org/funding](http://www.ncrpc.org/funding)



North Central  
Regional Planning Commission

109 N. Mill ■ PO Box 565  
Beloit, KS 67420 ■ [www.ncrpc.org](http://www.ncrpc.org)

## Hansen Foundation Assists Northwest Kansas Counties

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation has announced a commitment to infuse up to \$150,000 in new funds in the next 12 months in each of the 26 counties in its service area. The funds will support the immediate needs for local community grants and build or grow permanent funds for future community grants.

### Pass-through grants

2017 is the third year the Hansen Foundation has offered counties funding for pass-through grants. The funding will be distributed in May and September. Local community foundation boards or grant review committees will make the decisions regarding how the dollars are spent in their counties.

The county-specific funds are administered in partnership with the



Greater Northwest Kansas Community Foundation and the Greater Salina Community Foundation. Both of these partner foundations offer online applications.

### Endowment Building Grants

The Hansen Foundation first offered matching dollars for county-specific endowments last March. Each county selected a particular month from April 2016 to April 2017 in which to host a matching-event or campaign for an unrestricted county-wide grant fund. The Hansen Foundation matched each donation, up to \$50,000 per county. The initiative is being repeated this year, from May 2017 to April 2018.

### Strategic Doing Initiative

In addition to the funding announcements, the Hansen Foundation also announced a new initiative to help with county goal setting. The Foundation has contracted with Betty Johnson and Associates to facilitate the Strategic Doing process in each of the 26 counties that elects to participate.

The process will include broad representation from the county over a series of gatherings. Participants will work through three questions: what could we do to better our county; what should we do to better our county; and finally, what will we do to better our county?

*This condensed article appears courtesy of the Hansen Foundation. Eight counties in the NCRPC service area are included in the Hansen Foundation service area. ■*