

NCRPC NEWS

A publication of the North Central Regional Planning Commission

■ Sept. 2019
www.ncrpc.org

Program Helps Reduce Energy Costs

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, households that receive weatherization services experience average annual energy cost savings of \$283. A Trego County resident knows firsthand the financial impact of the Weatherization Assistance Program.

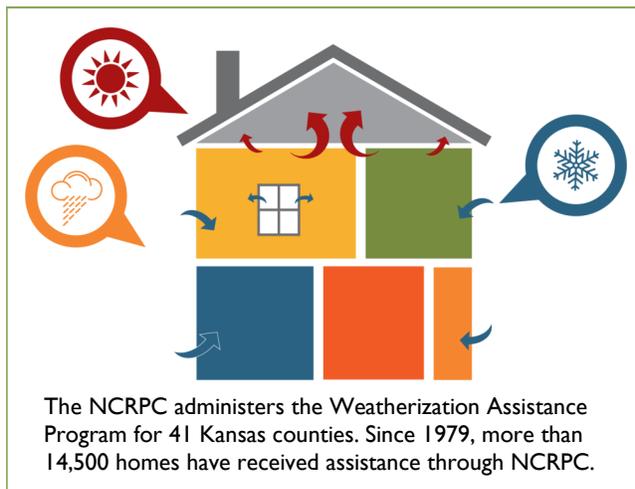
When the Trego County client applied for weatherization assistance, her home had many broken windows, an old HVAC system, and high utility costs. She also felt the financial burden of needing to have items in her home repaired and upgraded.

The client turned to NCRPC for assistance. The organization is one of four contracted weatherization service providers in Kansas. The Weatherization Assistance Program helps reduce energy costs for low-income households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring their health and safety.

After the client's application was approved and the home inspected, work could begin. Measures that were installed in the Trego County home include a new 92% forced air furnace with ductwork, new windows, high/low combustion vents, more efficient lighting, smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms, venting an exhaust fan to the exterior, as well as various

air sealing measures. According to the client, there has been great improvement in her utility usage as well as the comfort and condition of her home since weatherization was completed. It has also allowed her to turn her focus toward other items of her home that need attention.

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Eligibility for the program is based solely on income. Funding for this program is provided by the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).

October marks Energy Action Month and October 30 is recognized as Weatherization Day.

To learn more about the program or how to apply, visit www.ncrpc.org/services/housing/weatherization/. ■

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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

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Economic Development Conference Focuses on Resilience

You know you are in downtown Denver when each evening fire trucks roll by every hour and hints of smoke are in the air at the pedestrian level. I was in Denver recently for a regional director's conference facilitated by the Economic Development Administration. Forums occurred whereby regions were able to share what services they provide and how development occurs for new or different offerings. The conference is an opportunity to learn from peers.

Some of the most recent NCRPC developments I shared at the conference included nuisance reduction/abatement, housing down payment assistance, food system assessment and unmanned aircraft system research. Notably, NCKCN remains the first and only not-for-profit Internet service provider started

VIEWPOINT



Doug McKinney has been NCRPC Executive Director since 2008.

and still operated by a regional development organization.

Credit was given to staff, board and partner involvement for all that the NCRPC and its affiliates offer. In addition to the more recent developments, the core services

remain solid facets of this regional development organization that was begun in 1972 by active leaders with vision for future collaborations.

Economic resilience was a theme of the conference, especially in light of disaster recovery. Being prepared

for disaster — be it cyber, fire or water related — remains important. The ability to recover and build back better when challenges arise is critical for our communities to thrive.

Finally, the Census 2020 is near and vitally important to places and people in Kansas. Communities that prepare and support the count are likely to see beneficial results. Kansas Health Foundation is supporting this with a promotional campaign. The League of Kansas Municipalities has received a grant award from KHF through which it will provide assistance to cities in Kansas to aid in census accuracy. To learn more, visit the website at kansashealth.org/2019/03/12/2020census/.

As always, contact NCRPC for technical assistance with this or other needs. Safe journeys. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 26, 2019
NCRPC Executive Board Meeting
Beloit Office, 2 p.m.

Wednesday, October 16, 2019
Heritage Trust Fund Webinar
2 p.m.-4 p.m.
Email ks.shpo@ks.gov to RSVP

Thursday, October 17, 2019
Business Development Expo
Clay Center, 5th and Clark Streets
10 a.m.-6 p.m.
claycountycodevo.com/business-development-expo-2019.html

Thursday, October 31, 2019
NCRPC Executive Board Meeting
Beloit Office, 2 p.m.

Monday, November 11, 2019
NCRPC office closed in recognition of Veteran's Day.

Find more on the web »

Events: www.ncrpc.org/news/events
Funding sources and deadlines:
www.ncrpc.org/funding

Rural Voices Contest Offers High School Seniors Chance to Share Ideas, Win Cash

High school seniors in North Central Kansas are invited to compete for a chance to win \$850 by submitting a written essay or short video in the 2019-2020 Rural Voices Youth Contest.

Entries are to be reflective of this year's contest theme, which is "Rural Kansas...Rural by Choice." Students submitting the top entry in each category will receive a cash award of \$850 and be recognized with the John R. Cyr Rural Voices Award, named in honor of Cyr who served for 22 years as NCRPC Executive Director. The winning entries will also be published on the NCRPC website.

Any senior in high school who lives in or attends a school in the 12-county NCRPC service area is eligible to enter the contest. A team option is available for the video category.



The NCRPC has awarded more than \$22,000 to seniors from around the region since 2006.

The deadline to submit an entry is December 2. Additional information and registration details are available at www.ncrpc.org/ruralvoices. ■

Project Spotlight: Mankato Housing

Long-time City of Mankato Mayor Don Koester credits a strategic planning meeting 16 years ago with helping the community chart a course to address its housing needs.

“We asked the community what needed to be done,” Koester said. “As a council, we took the ideas and tried to prioritize the biggest needs.”

That meeting was in his first year as mayor and he continues to serve in that role. Housing was among the list of priorities identified.

The community received a boost when it was awarded funds in 2005 through the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce. The funding was part of

a Comprehensive Development project that included construction of a new multi-purpose community

building, park and street improvements, and housing demolition and rehabilitation. The Comprehensive Development Program is no longer offered.

“The housing in that first project was targeted right around the community center,” Koester said. “It made a small area so you could see a big impact. It was very successful.”

The city has since received funding for two additional housing rehabilitation projects through the CDBG Program. In total, the projects have helped rehabilitate 28 homes and demolish 18 dilapidated units.

“Our work is not complete with housing, but it is certainly going in the right direction,” Koester said. “If you can rehabilitate a house and stop it from going downhill, you keep it a viable housing unit for your



Renovation of four loft apartments in downtown Mankato was included in one of the city's recent housing projects.

“Our work is not complete with housing, but it is certainly going in the right direction.”

— Don Koester, City of Mankato Mayor

community. You can stop that cycle of decline.”

The city is now in the process of deciding next steps

to address some infrastructure needs.

“Infrastructure goes together with housing,” Koester said. “We are trying to look at things at a big scale for more years knowing that we will enhance what is there (housing) by what we do next.”

NCRPC Housing Director Carol Torkelson has administered all three housing projects in Mankato and credits the community for putting in the work to address housing.

“The City of Mankato committed to saving the existing housing stock and removing dilapidated structures,” Torkelson said. “It is something they could bring to their citizens at minimal cost to the city.” ■

There are many great things happening in North Central Kansas communities. Periodically we plan to feature projects from around the region to share ways communities have solved challenges.

NEWS BRIEFS

Heritage Trust Fund Webinar Announced

The Heritage Trust Fund (HTF) is a competitive grant program that provides matching funds for the preservation of properties listed on the Kansas or National Register of Historic Places. If you are planning to apply for a HTF grant in the coming year or want to learn more, there is an online webinar/workshop on Wednesday, October 16 at 2 p.m. To register, call 785-272-8681 ext. 240 or email kshs.shpo@ks.gov. ■

Business Development Expo Set for October 17

Business owners and entrepreneurs in North Central Kansas are invited to attend a Business Development Expo on Thursday, October 17 in Clay Center. The event is sponsored by the Clay County Economic Development Group.

The Expo is free to anyone who is interested in starting, growing, or transitioning a business. Attendees will be able to connect with organizations and service providers relevant to helping them achieve their business goals. The event also includes breakout sessions on marketing, finance, management and planning.

The Expo is from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the United Methodist Church's Family Life Center at the corner of 5th and Clark Streets in Clay Center. For a current list of exhibitors and a breakout session schedule, visit claycountycodevo.com/business-development-expo-2019.html. ■



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Family Joins Forces to Bring Back Concordia Restaurant

Nostalgia and a love for tacos led one family to bring back Taco Grande to Concordia.

Chad and Malinda Sallman, Brock Sallman, and Loren and Dena Miller formed SallMill, LLC last year for the purpose of re-opening a Taco Grande franchise in Concordia. The Sallman's and Miller's opened a new Taco Grande restaurant in April at its original location at 1421 E. 6th Street.

The owners have ties to the original Concordia restaurant that operated from 1975 until the early 2000s — including Dena who worked at the previous Taco Grande during high school.

“The response to re-opening Taco Grande has been overwhelming,” Dena Miller said. “Concordia and the surrounding communities have



Taco Grande opened in April in Concordia at 1421 E 6th Street.

supported us since the buzz of re-opening occurred almost a year ago. We as owners work really hard to ensure we are running a business that will sustain itself for years to come.”

The restaurant offers a menu of fast food Mexican cuisine and prides itself on using Kansas beef. Dine in seating and drive through service is available. Future plans are to add

convenience options such as online ordering through an app and local delivery. The business has 15 part-time and 4 full-time employees.

This project was made possible with investment by the owners as well as funding from The Citizens National Bank of Concordia and NCKCN-Four Rivers Business Down Payment Assistance Loan Program. Additional local funds for building improvements were awarded from the Get in the Cloud small business grant program administered by CloudCorp.

For more information about the financing programs used, contact NCRPC Business Finance Director Debra Peters at 785-738-2218 or visit www.ncrpc.org/services/business. For more information about the business, find them on Facebook. ■