

NCRPC NEWS

JUNE 2022 Q2 NEWSLETTER

North Central Regional
Planning Commission 

50 YEARS

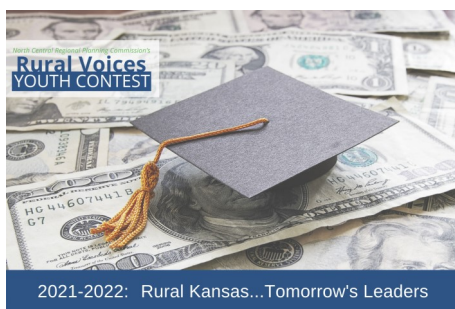
Serving Kansans since 1972

Rural Voices Winners Announced

Two High School Seniors Recognized

Two high school seniors in North Central Kansas were recognized with the John R. Cyr Rural Voices Award for submitting the top entries in the 2021-2022 Rural Voices Youth Contest sponsored by the North Central Regional Planning Commission.

Phillip Shirkey, a senior at Concordia Junior-Senior High School, and Hart Nurnberg, a senior at Southeast of Saline High School, submitted the winning entries in this year's contest. Each received a cash award of \$850. The contest awards are named in honor of John Cyr who served for 22 years as the NCRPC Executive Director.



Since 2006, NCRPC has awarded more than \$27,000 to high school seniors from the 12-county NCRPC service area. To learn more and view the winning entries, visit www.ncrpc.org/ruralvoices.

Home Ownership Program Update

Program Assisted in Purchase of 25 Homes Last Year

Financial incentives offered through the NCK Home Ownership Program assisted in the purchase of 25 homes in the region following the pilot program's official expansion to Jewell and Saline Counties in June 2021.

The program assisted eligible home buyers with down payment and closing cost assistance. The total value of the 25 homes was \$4.3 million, with \$312,500 coming from the pilot program. Five homes in Jewell County and three homes in Saline County were purchased with program assistance. Another 17 homes were purchased in counties where the NCK Home Ownership Pilot Program had launched previously. The program completed in December 2021.

The NCRPC administered the program offered by its housing non-profit, NCK Housing Opportunities, Inc. The non-profit serves Cloud, Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic, and Saline Counties. An award from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation of Logan, Kansas, assisted in the creation of the loan and grant pool, along with a regional match from NCK Housing Opportunities, Inc. The mission of the non-profit is to preserve and strengthen housing in its service area.

The 2021 pilot defined and marketed an eligible home project to include a home purchase price of \$50,000 or greater including an

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ABOUT US

Our primary service area includes 12 counties and 83 cities in North Central Kansas.

OUR MISSION

Advancing rural Kansas through comprehensive planning and development services.

CONTACT US

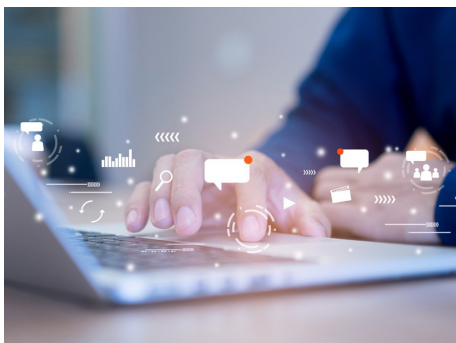
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Learn more about the NCRPC at:
www.ncrpc.org

If you have a story idea or would like to update your address, email us at: communications@ncrpc.org.

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NCKCN Expanding Internet Services to New Location

The North Central Kansas Community Network (NCKCN) will soon be expanding its broadband Internet services to the community of Asherville, located in Mitchell County.

NCKCN is an Internet service provider that was originally formed in 1995 to help connect communities that were underserved. Today, it continues to adapt and grow to meet the changing technology demands in North Central Kansas. NCKCN is a 501(c)3 non-profit affiliate of the NCRPC.

The new services will offer speeds up to 50Mbps with potential of up to 100Mbps, unlimited usage, and always on service. Asherville adds to the growing list of NCKCN wireless Internet communities. NCKCN also offers 21 active NCK-WiFi hotspot locations distributed throughout nine communities. NCK-WiFi, is a partnership of NCKCN and Cunningham Telephone & Cable (CTC).

For more about NCKCN, visit www.nckcn.com.



An Introduction from the Executive Director

By John Shea

I was humbled to be offered the Executive Director position with the North Central Regional Planning Commission and I was very excited to take over my responsibilities in early-May. The scope of the NCRPC's activities are truly impressive (and intimidating for a new hire), but I am committed to working with the NCRPC team to continue and grow the significant resources that the NCRPC brings to its member counties.

North Central Kansas faces many of the same challenges that other rural areas, such as Piscataquis County in Maine (where I last worked), confront: an older demographic, a declining population, workforce and housing constraints, access to investment capital, aging infrastructure, and difficulty keeping young people and families. At the same time, it has so much to offer: a wonderful quality of life, affordable living costs, a community-oriented environment that welcomes new residents, and a tradition of home-grown innovation that can serve as the catalyst for



John Shea

meeting and overcoming the challenges before us.

To me, the first and best purpose of the NCRPC is to acquire the resources,

facilitate the strategic vision, and develop the partnerships that will create a more prosperous and sustainable North Central Kansas. This might sometimes seem a daunting task, but with the hard work and perseverance of the incredible staff, board of directors, and larger NCRPC community, we can hardly fail.

I look forward to meeting and working with all of you in the coming months and years. Feel free to reach out to me anytime at the NCRPC if there's anything you'd like to discuss; I value and would really benefit from your input and perspectives. You can reach me at the NCRPC or by email at executivedirector@ncrpc.org.

EVENTS

NCRPC Executive Board Meetings

Thursday, July 28, 2022

Miltonvale, KS

Thursday, August 25, 2022

Minneapolis, KS

Thursday, September 29, 2022

Beloit, KS

Check the website for updates.

Looking ahead!

Plans are underway for a 50th Anniversary Banquet in Beloit, KS in Fall 2022. More information coming soon.

Find more on the web »

Events:

www.ncrpc.org/news/events

Funding sources and deadlines:

www.ncrpc.org/funding



Home Ownership Program Updates

Currently Available:

Washington County Home Ownership Program

Offered by Four Rivers Housing Opportunities, Inc., a non-profit serving Clay, Dickinson, Marshall and Washington Counties. Managed by North Central Regional Planning Commission. Limited funds available on a first come, first served basis. Act now!



Project Spotlight: Innovation Stimulus Program

Program Provided Support, Engineering Services to Local Businesses including Double L Manufacturing

By Bret Lanz, Commercialization Director for Technology Development Institute

As the economy continues to recover from the pandemic, supply chain concerns and labor shortages continue to impact businesses across the region. In an effort to streamline production processes and document its growing line of products, Double L Manufacturing applied to receive engineering support through the Innovation Stimulus Program.

The Innovation Stimulus Program was a partnership between the Technology Development Institute (TDI) at Kansas State University and the NCRPC. It was made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the CARES Act.

Since its inception in 2017, Double L Manufacturing, located in Clay Center has continued to grow despite the pandemic challenges. The company specializes in metal fabrication with a mixture of tractor and skid steer attachments which can be private

labeled and are sold at a number of implement dealers across the region. It also provides custom fabrication services.

The company applied to the Innovation Stimulus Program in hopes of obtaining engineering support to create CAD models of several of its highest selling products. The models would enable creation of individual part drawings and a detailed set of manufacturing instructions to assist in training new employees.

"We are focused on daily production and ensuring we have all the materials on hand to meet our customer's needs. We don't typically have time or the resources to create engineering models and detailed work instructions" said Thomas Mulligan, owner of Double L. "Working with the engineering team at K-State has been a great experience to generate the documentation needed to ensure the highest quality product possible."



Double L Manufacturing worked with Technology Development Institute to create SolidWorks™ models for some of its product lines. (Courtesy Photo)

As part of the project, TDI created SolidWorks™ models of the company's bale spear, pallet forks and tree saw product line in addition to many of the fixtures needed to produce the products. They used the models to work with Double L staff to create detailed manufacturing instructions for each product to improve quality and reduce production time.

"Thomas has done an excellent job of growing his company during some of the most difficult times in recent memory and continues to expand into new products and services," said Bret Lanz, Commercialization Director for Technology Development Institute.

Home Ownership, *From page 1*

existing home, existing home with planned/financed upgrades totaling \$50,000 or greater, manufactured home including lot and infrastructure, or new construction.

"The results of this new marketing effort resulted in 10 of the 25 eligible home projects including \$211,000 investment in improvements/remodeling of the existing home being purchased and a \$1,411,000 investment in new housing stock," NCRPC Home Ownership Program Coordinator Keegan Bailey said."

Program data indicate positive local impacts. In a survey of home buyers, 20% were first-time home buyers and 39% took a new job in the last 24

months with 10% of those reporting the program incentive was a factor in their job decision.

"With the expansion of the pilot program to Jewell and Saline counties, we continued to see strong interest from individuals with local ties to the region with 73% of homebuyers reporting that they graduated from a school in the NCRPC 12-county service area," NCRPC Home Ownership Program Manager Debra Peters said. "We were also encouraged by 24% of buyers moving from out of state."

Additional pilot programs have been completed in the City of Marysville and Cloud, Dickinson,

Ellsworth, Lincoln and Mitchell Counties. Since 2018, home ownership programs have combined to assist in the purchase of 114 homes in the region with an approximate value of \$14.2 million. Future plans include the expansion of pilot home ownership programs in each of the remaining counties in the NCRPC 12-county service area, pending the availability of funding.

To learn more, visit www.ncrpc.org/services/homeownership/.





North Central Regional Planning Commission

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Business Owner Creates Platform for Mental Wellness Tools

Loan Provides Capital for Business to Pivot Operations

A revenue decline during the pandemic pushed one local business owner to take a new and proactive approach to her business.

Catherine DiNuzzo is a Licensed Professional Counselor, author, and speaker. Based in Beloit, Kansas, she has been in private practice since 2010. Faced with challenges during the pandemic, DiNuzzo pivoted her business model and founded Sacred Heart Mental Wellness. The new platform provides tools and resources for mental wellness and dealing with anxiety from a Catholic perspective. Her accompanying book, "The Catholic Guide Through Anxiety," is currently available on Amazon.

"When the pandemic hit, the mental health sector did very well. However, in the months immediately following,

there was uncertainty and financial constraints and it began to have an impact on my business," DiNuzzo said. "I was also seeing how the pandemic would affect people's mental health as a whole and I saw a need. My goal is to change mental health into mental wellness. Part of that shift for me was to be proactive and make tools and resources more accessible with shorter, smaller snippets of information that are more digestible."

A business loan enabled DiNuzzo to invest in the online resources that she says she would not have otherwise had the capital to do at the time.

"I worked with a local studio for website design/videography and a local person helped me with my book. I really appreciated this opportunity and this was one way I could give back to



Catherine DiNuzzo

my area. The loan provided a bridge to help me get to the next place with my business goals."

The project was made possible, in part, through assistance from

the NCK Business Relief Loan Program that was funded by the EDA CARES Act RLF 2020 and administered by the NCRPC. Additional investment was made by the owner. For more information about the NCRPC Business Finance program, contact Debra Peters at 785-738-2218 or visit www.ncrpc.org/services/business.

For more about the business, visit www.sacredheartmentalwellness.com.