



2023 QUARTER 3 NEWSLETTER

# NCRPC NEWS

An update from the North Central Regional Planning Commission

## North Central Kansas Regional Relocation Pilot Program Has Positive Local Impacts

*Pilot Program Helps 25 Families Stake Roots in Region*

Financial incentives offered through the pilot North Central Kansas Regional Relocation Program attracted 38 new residents and assisted in the purchase of 25 homes in the region in the past year.



The pilot program launched August 15, 2022 and concluded in Spring 2023. It was available in Cloud, Ellsworth, Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Ottawa, Republic and Saline counties. The program helped make home ownership more affordable for those relocating to the region by reducing the barriers of down payments and closing costs.

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.

"This initiative would not have been possible without the generous assistance from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation and the tremendous support we received from area banks and economic development groups," Program Manager Keegan Bailey said.

The program offered a combination of a 0% down payment assistance loan of \$10,000 and closing cost grant of

\$2,500 when purchasing a home of \$50,000 or greater. In total, it impacted 64 residents living in 25 households. Of the residents who accessed the program, 15 moved from out of state, 26 moved from within North Central Kansas, and 23 moved from elsewhere in Kansas.

To be eligible, home buyers had to relocate to an eligible county in North Central Kansas within 18 months of the request. The primary bank loan also had to be provided by a bank having a physical location in the NCRPC 12-county service area.

"We were encouraged by the program results and positive local impacts in the region," Bailey said.

Since 2018, the various home ownership loan/grant programs in the region administered by the NCRPC have combined to assist in the purchase of 149 homes with an approximate value of \$19.9 million. The previous pilot projects led to the creation of the 2022-2023 NCK Regional Relocation Program.

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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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# Around the Region: Combining Housing and Workforce Needs

## *Challenges Lead Nonprofit Board, Administrator to Get Creative in Approach to Address Needs*

Workforce and housing needs often go hand in hand. When recruiting staff was a struggle, Nicol Home Facility Administrator Carter Olson got creative with efforts to address both needs.

When Olson began work in 2018 as Facility Administrator at Nicol Home in Glasco, Kansas, there were 11 employees. The 32-bed skilled nursing facility is a nonprofit. He approached his board about recruitment issues and they ultimately offered relocation bonuses to all staff at different levels. This was just the beginning of his efforts to grow the staff to the 25 who work there today.

Olson also began the search to buy vacant homes to renovate so that he could sell or, in some cases, rent back to his employees. In the past year he matched employees with two homes — one a rental and the other a renovation project that he sold.

"My goal is to breathe life back into a home so an employee can live there secure," Olson said. "There is a huge benefit to having employees invested and living in the community."

Carter and his family do much of the labor on the homes, though they have consulted or hired local

contractors when a specialty need arises. Olson and his wife have three young children.

"Having a young family keeps our mind on what we can do for the town to keep it growing," Olson said.

The family is careful with their investments. They consider the big-ticket item needs and weigh that into the price of the home and mortgage cost — all while trying to keep it affordable for employees with a short-term mortgage. Some efforts to help place employees in the community have taken less financial investment.

"Sometimes we simply help landlords clean up homes that staff are planning to move into to rent," Olson said. "We truly care about our employees. Helping them find a suitable place to live is one way that we can show that. Keeping houses full also helps keep the community growing and vibrant."

The efforts do not stop with housing for Olson or the Nicol Home Board of Directors. He recently helped spearhead fundraising for murals. The result to date is seven murals painted throughout town. Nicol Home recently



Nicol Home Facility Administrator Carter Olson renovated and sold this previously vacant home to an employee last year.

invested in helping to bring a medical clinic to town. Next, they have their sights set on opening a Glasco community gym.

"I have a great board who have allowed me to invest in the community," Olson said. "We try to think about what can we do to help keep the community sustainable, because it's hard to have a successful business without a community."

Olson was not a stranger to Glasco when he took the job in 2018 with his great grandmother being a former Glasco resident and having visited there for family reunions. He grew up in Kansas City, moved to Wamego his senior year of high school and graduated from K-State.

"My journey has allowed me to bring a different perspective. Things take time to change," Olson said. "My biggest piece of advice for others is to keep trying and have patience."



## **Remote Online Initiative Launches in Four North Central KS Counties**

Residents in Clay, Dickinson, Marshall and Washington counties are eligible for scholarships to pay for month-long online classes that will provide certification as a remote work professional or remote work leader. NCRPC is working cooperatively with K-State Research and Extension on this Remote Online Initiative project, which is funded by a NetWorked Community Solutions Grant from NetWork Kansas. "The goal is to encourage employers to successfully utilize remote workers and to provide people with training needed to work remotely successfully," said Deb Ohlde, NCRPC Assistant Director for Strategic Initiatives. To learn more or to register, visit [kansasremotework.com/registration](https://kansasremotework.com/registration).

## Project Spotlight: Weatherization

### *Improvements to Increase Energy Efficiency of Multi- Family Unit Completed*

Residents living in a 40-unit affordable housing complex in Osborne, Kansas, should start to see savings on energy costs thanks to improvements made possible through the Weatherization Assistance Program.

The Osborne Housing Authority, started in 1968, manages the Solomon Valley Apartments. The complex is comprised of duplexes, 4-plexes and a 6-plex, with the newest units constructed in 1982.

The Weatherization Assistance Program allowed for the installation of more than 26,000 square feet of attic insulation, nearly 8,600 square feet of sidewall insulation, and the installation of air sealing measures such as weatherstripping, caulking, and door sweeps. Throughout the apartments new smoke and carbon monoxide detectors were installed as well as 350 LED lightbulbs. Other minor health and safety measures were also completed.

Weatherization helps reduce energy costs for households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes. Through weatherization improvements and upgrades, households save on average \$283 or more every year. The Weatherization Assistance Program is offered at no charge to income-



Weatherization assistance improvements at this multi-family apartment complex in Osborne increased comfort and energy efficiency for its tenants.

eligible families. The NCRPC administers the program for 41 Kansas counties.

"Many of our clients are residents living in single family homes," said Kendra Ryser, NCRPC Weatherization Director. "When we get the opportunity to complete a multi-family unit project like the one in Osborne, it is rewarding knowing the program is positively impacting more residents at one time."

Ryser acknowledges there are many similar multi-family housing units in the region that could benefit from the Weatherization Assistance Program. The first step is applying. Please note that due to program demand, there currently is a waiting list for services.

"They were on the waiting list for about two years," Ryser said. "The work then took about three months and was completed in March of this year. The process was not quick, but the benefits will hopefully last a long time."

To learn more about the program or to apply, visit [www.ncrpc.org/services/housing/weatherization](http://www.ncrpc.org/services/housing/weatherization).



October marks Energy Awareness Month and Weatherization Day is officially recognized on October 30.

Did you know that over its more than 40-year history nationally, the Weatherization Assistance Program has weatherized more than 8.1 million homes? For energy saving tips, go to [www.energy.gov/energysaver](http://www.energy.gov/energysaver).

## NCRPC Welcomes Larson to Staff

We are pleased to announce that Jared Larson has joined the staff as Weatherization Inspector. He will be performing weatherization inspections for the Household Weatherization Assistance Program the NCRPC administers in a 41-county service

area in Kansas. Jared is a graduate of NCK Tech, Beloit, with an emphasis in



Jared Larson

Advanced Computer Technology. He also holds multiple OSHA certifications.

Jared was raised on a family farm in Smith Center and moved to Beloit in 2004 to attend NCK Tech. Prior to working with the NCRPC, he worked for 12 years in the agricultural sector. He and his wife keep busy with three young children in their household. In addition to spending time with family, he enjoys building computers and anything to do with technology. Jared also spends his spare time working to update and restore their older home.

## EVENTS & MORE

### Executive Board Meetings:

Thursday, September 28

Thursday, October 26

Thursday, November 30

No December Meeting

### Funding sources and deadlines:

» [www.ncrpc.org/funding](http://www.ncrpc.org/funding)





## North Central Regional Planning Commission

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# New Custom Meat Processor Offers Mobile Harvesting

## *Loan Program Assists with Abilene Start-Up Business*

A new, custom meat processing business is now open in Abilene, Kansas. Midwest Meats, with headquarters located at 610 South Buckeye Avenue near the downtown district, officially got its start earlier this year with its self-contained mobile harvesting unit.

The unit is taken directly to farms for custom harvesting, which provides flexibility and convenience for producers. The business currently offers processing of beef, pork, lamb, goat and bison. Future plans are to grow the retail side of business with a craft butcher shop.

Midwest Meats is a family endeavor for owners Troy and Wendy Leith and their children who are also involved with daily operations. Their son, Bryan, is plant manager, and daughter, Morgan, is retail clerk.



Headquarters for Midwest Meats is located at 610 South Buckeye Avenue in Abilene. The location features a mural painted by Mindy's Murals of Junction City. (Courtesy Photo)

"Business is going great," said co-owner Wendy Leith. "We started custom processing in March and have been pretty booked since. With the

help of the Dickinson County Community Foundation we were able to buy our retail bunkers and fresh meat case and started a small amount of retail items in early August."

The startup business was made possible with investment by the owners as well as funding from Pinnacle Bank in Abilene, Community Foundation of Dickinson County-Impact Fund loan, and the NCK Business Down Payment Assistance Loan Program and NCRPC Revolving Loan Fund offered through the NCRPC Business Finance Program.

For more information about the NCRPC Business Finance program, contact Debra Peters or visit [www.ncrpc.org/services/business](http://www.ncrpc.org/services/business). For more information about the business, find it on social media or visit [midwestmeatsabilene.com](http://midwestmeatsabilene.com).