



2025 QUARTER 2 NEWSLETTER

# NCRPC NEWS

An update from the North Central Regional Planning Commission

## Meet the New Executive Director

*Q & A with Recently Appointed Director Debra Carlson Ohlde*

The North Central Regional Planning Commission (NCRPC) Board of Directors has appointed Debra Carlson Ohlde as its new Executive Director, effective May 1. To read the full news release, visit [www.ncrpc.org/director](http://www.ncrpc.org/director).

Ohlde is no stranger to the North Central Regional Planning Commission. She initially joined the staff in 1994 and served in various roles,



Deb Ohlde

culminating in the position of Assistant Director, through 2016. After that, Deb stayed connected to community development while operating her consulting company, NEW Heartland Freelance. She also served as the Director of Grower Services for Kansas Corn before rejoining the NCRPC in 2022. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Economics and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Kansas State University. Deb and her husband, Tim, are long-time residents of Clyde.

**For someone unfamiliar with NCRPC or its services, what would you tell them?**

Our strength comes from a staff that lives in and loves the region. We understand our member cities and

counties, and that impacts how we provide services. We are invested in the region so we strive to provide high quality service and doing so with integrity underpins what we do.

**What excites you most about the future of the NCRPC?**

There is always opportunity for communities, businesses and non-profits in rural areas. I'm amazed at the number of young families returning who are choosing this lifestyle and already engaging in community activities and volunteering. We are in such great hands. The NCRPC has the chance to be a key player in solving the challenges we do face and supporting the next generation's great ideas.

**Do you have any advice for communities or businesses in the region or for others working in the field of community development?**

Dream big, but validate your idea. I really love the book, "Who Owns The Ice House." It captures an approach to entrepreneurship that I think works for businesses and communities. In summary, you look to solve a problem, experiment with your solution on a small scale and then just keep growing and improving. People will support/pay for things that are done well. We see impressive projects and business transformations all the time in the region.

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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

North Central Regional Planning Commission  
109 N. Mill, PO Box 565  
Beloit, KS 67420 | 785-738-2218



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# Initiative Helps Homeowners Complete Rehabilitation Projects

## *Housing Demolition Funding Still Available in Several Kansas Counties*

Financial assistance provided through the third year of the NCRPC Housing Initiative enabled the completion of 90 housing rehabilitation projects across six Kansas counties: Logan, Osborne, Ottawa, Phillips, Rawlins, and Sherman.

The NCRPC administered the initiative through a partnership with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation of Logan, Kansas. The initiative offered two pilot programs: a Moderate-Income Housing Rehabilitation Pilot Program and a Demolition Pilot Program.

The Moderate Income Housing Rehabilitation Pilot Program provided reimbursement grants of up to \$10,000 to homeowners to complete housing upgrades. The most common upgrades completed with grant assistance were new HVAC systems, windows, and flooring.

"This year, we again saw a huge demand for the rehabilitation program," said Keegan Bailey, NCRPC Housing Director. "It is making an impact in our rural communities by assisting homeowners that meet

moderate-income requirements, which is a group that is not often served by other funding programs."

Although funds for rehabilitation have been spent for all six counties, there is still funding available for the demolition of dilapidated residential structures in these locations through the Demolition Pilot Program. Property owners may apply for reimbursement grants of up to \$5,000 per property for the removal and cleanup of residential structures, such as houses, garages, and sheds. There are no income restrictions to be eligible to apply.

"The decision to remove a residential structure is usually not an easy one to make, but it can be necessary if a property is impacting the health and safety of neighboring residents," said Bailey. "Doing so may also open up an empty lot for new construction."

As of July 2, the following slots were available for the demolition pilot program: Logan County (9), Osborne County (2), Ottawa County (2), Phillips County (4), Rawlins County (2), and Sherman County (5). The program will



end on March 31, 2026 or when funds are expended.

"We are grateful for the continued support of the Dane G. Hansen Foundation in helping to make these programs possible through the NCRPC Housing Initiative," said Bailey.

Similar pilot programs have also been completed in Cheyenne, Cloud, Decatur, Gove, Graham, Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Republic, Rooks, Russell, and Smith counties.

For the most up-to-date information on funding and to apply for the Demolition Pilot Program funding currently available in Logan, Osborne, Ottawa, Phillips, Rawlins, and Sherman Counties, please visit [www.ncrpc.org/housinginitiative](http://www.ncrpc.org/housinginitiative).

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## Energy Assessments, Grant Help Available for Eligible Entities

Helping to reduce energy costs for rural small businesses and agricultural producers is one of the goals of the staff at the Kansas Energy Program, housed within the K-State Engineering Extension Department.

The program provides free energy assessments to eligible small businesses, agricultural producers, and non-profit entities. It also provides assistance with applying for USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants to agricultural producers or rural small businesses. Applications for the REAP program are anticipated to reopen on October 1.

The Kansas Energy Program assists with the REAP grants, which fall into two main categories: renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements. While planning can take time, support is available.

"Depending on the project and its complexity, we can usually come out and conduct an on-site energy assessment," said Ryan Hamel, Energy Program Specialist with Kansas State University Engineering Extension. "For energy efficiency improvements, we look at existing equipment and the proposed new equipment and estimate the savings. It's important to

note that for energy efficiency projects, they must involve replacing an existing system and cannot be for an expansion."

Funding through the REAP program is provided via reimbursement-based grants of up to 25% of eligible project costs.

"We are happy to provide assistance/guidance with the energy assessments and grants. We try to make the application process as simple as possible," said Hamel.

To learn more or to get started, visit [kansasenergyprogram.org/assessments](http://kansasenergyprogram.org/assessments).

# Endowment Fund Grows with Event

## *New Fund Gets Small Boost, Planning Beginning for Impact*

The newly established NCRPC endowment, officially named the Todd Tuttle Fund for Arts and Science, received a small boost through its participation in a one-day giving event held in April.

"Even though we are just beginning, donors chose to contribute during this event, and we are grateful for their generosity," said Todd Tuttle, Technical Consultant to NCKCN, an NCRPC affiliate. "Their confidence in the mission of the fund will help us grow the endowment so we can begin making an impact."

Donations received during the Give to Grow event were matched dollar for dollar. The event was sponsored by the Solomon Valley Community Foundation.

"We are excited to see this fund grow so that future generations can



benefit in the areas of Arts and Science," said Julia Rabe, Executive Director of the Solomon Valley Community Foundation. "The Foundation is thrilled to partner with Todd Tuttle and NCRPC to achieve their philanthropic goals."

To learn more about the fund, visit [www.ncrpc.org/endowment](http://www.ncrpc.org/endowment). To learn how to make a donation online, visit [www.solomonvalleycf.org](http://www.solomonvalleycf.org) and look for the "Give Now" button.

## Ohlde, *From page 1*

### **What is a leadership lesson you've learned that was impactful?**

I admire my husband's approach to life and his career. He always does ALL the research and has a strong knowledge base on any subject he is working on. He is also great at studying all the details. I tend to be bigger picture focused so I appreciate the balance of the detail person. He also represents servant leadership so well. He works very hard, behind the scenes and prefers to deflect the credit to others.

### **If you weren't in this career, what would you be doing?**

I thought very hard about going to law school. Once in awhile I wish I would have, but I think I would have been most interested in being in a court room and that doesn't actually happen that much. I also really loved

my accounting classes at KSU. But I don't think I would have enjoyed doing that type of work all the time. A little bit here and there is enough.

### **In your spare time, what do you enjoy doing the most?**

I have always enjoyed reading and still do. I rarely read fiction; it's usually something self-help, biographical, or work-related. Podcasts are also wonderful because I do drive a fair amount and enjoy walking outside and I like to listen to them rather than music. Over the years, I have enjoyed the different volunteer things I have done – teaching Sunday School, being a 4-H leader, coaching, etc. I can honestly say that I enjoyed my 12 years on our local Board of Education. It is so important to have strong schools in our small towns.

## MEET THE TEAM

We are pleased to introduce Alex Cooper, who joined the NCRPC staff as a Weatherization Inspector in March. Alex was born and raised in Beloit and is a graduate of Wichita State University, where he earned a Bachelor of General Studies degree. He brings extensive construction experience to his position, having previously worked in the construction field in both Beloit and Wichita before returning to Beloit for this role.



Alex Cooper

Alex and his wife, Katherine, have two young children. In his free time, Alex enjoys spending time with family and friends, going to the lake, and is an avid sports fan who also loves coaching youth sports.

## A TRIBUTE TO OUR COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of our colleague and friend, Kendra Ryser. Kendra has been an integral part of our team since 2019 and served as our Weatherization Director for the past three years. She was a bright light to everyone who met her and was dedicated to serving clients with kindness, professionalism, and compassion. Our thoughts are with Kendra's family and friends during this difficult time.



Kendra Ryser



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

# New Property Allows Concordia Business to Add Product Line

*NCRPC Business Finance Program Assists in Building Purchase Project*

A historic Conoco station located along U.S. Highway 81 in Concordia, Kansas, will soon offer a creative experience for all ages.

Eighty-One Enterprises, LLC, owned by Lucas Chavey, recently purchased the property to remodel it for a new product line for his wife's business. Sarah Chavey has owned and operated Moody Hue Studio for many years in a rented space in downtown Concordia. Renovations on the new location began in 2025, and Sarah plans to reopen it soon under the new name, The Break Pad, to reflect the expanded offerings.

The business will continue to feature its paint studio while also introducing a newly added plant bar. The plant bar allows customers to design personalized potted plant arrangements to take home and enjoy.

In addition to planting and painting, The Break Pad will also include a private event rental space for group planting and painting as well as other events such as bridal showers, social club gatherings, graduation parties, and committee meetings. The Break Pad is located in the main building of the old station at 137 E. 7th in Concordia. The north building (612 Lincoln) provides office space for the Chavey's, while the garage area is being rented.

This project, which included the purchase of two commercial buildings and renovation of the space for The Break Pad, was made possible through investments from the owners, assistance from The Citizens National Bank in Concordia, and the NCK Business Down Payment Assistance Loan Program offered by NCRPC. To learn more about the financing



Lucas and Sarah Chavey have been working on a project to renovate the former Conoco station in Concordia, located along U.S. Highway 81, to accommodate a new product line for Sarah's business. (Courtesy Photo)

program used, contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Finance Director, at [dpeters@nckcn.com](mailto:dpeters@nckcn.com) or visit [www.ncrpc.org/services/business](http://www.ncrpc.org/services/business).

To learn more about The Break Pad and its services, visit them on social media at [www.facebook.com/t.breakpad](https://www.facebook.com/t.breakpad).