

NEBRASKA

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Nebraska Department of Economic Development
P.O. Box 94666, Lincoln, NE 68509-4666

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November 2004

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*Happy Holidays
from your
colleagues at
DED!*

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2004 Edgerton Quality Award Recipients Announced

Governor Johanns announced ten businesses as recipients of the 2004 Edgerton Quality Awards for their ongoing efforts in quality and performance excellence. This is a record number of recipients for the award since it started in 1993. The Edgerton Award is patterned after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award program, which is the nation's highest honor for quality and performance excellence. Edgerton Awards are presented annually by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development through the Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership, along with co-sponsors, The Nebraska Diplomats and the Nebraska Section of the American Society for Quality.

Each business applying for the award completes a report summarizing their quality and performance excellence practices in seven categories: leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, human resources, product and service processes, and business results.

Examiners for The Edgerton Award review each applicant's report, conduct on-site reviews and complete a feedback report for each business applying. Examiners are volunteer quality practitioners within the state. The examiners in the rigorous review of each applicant log over 2,000 hours.

Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk received **The Edgerton Award for Progress** this year.

2004 Edgerton Awards for Excellence:

- Eaton Corporation Torque Controls Division, Hastings
- Lincoln Plating

2004 Edgerton Awards for Progress:

- Ayars & Ayars, Inc.
- Fremont Area Medical Center
- Molex, Inc., Lincoln
- St. Francis Medical Center, Grand Island

2004 Edgerton Awards for Commitment:

- Alegent Health Orthopaedic Institute Joint Replacement Center Bergan Mercy Medical Center, Omaha
- Jefferson Community Health Center, Fairbury
- The Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha

For information about the Edgerton program, contact Jenne Rodriguez at 800-426-6505, 402-471-3745, or email: jenne@neded.org.



Mike Baldino, Nebraska Diplomats President; Todd Lewis, Toni Herrera, and Hank Orme, Lincoln Plating; and Governor Johanns



Mike Baldino; John Berry and Warren Crouse, Eaton Torque Controls Product Division; and Governor Johanns

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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



Richard Baier, Director

Dear Nebraska Development Partner:

Over the past year, many of you have heard me talk about the importance of building a solid foundation for a successful economic development program that includes business retention/expansion, business attraction, business creation (entrepreneurship), community development and tourism. One part of this economic development puzzle that is often overlooked and undervalued is tourism.

This past month, I had the opportunity to attend the 2004 Nebraska Travel Conference at the Gering Civic Center. I continue to be amazed by the enthusiasm and commitment of our tourism supporters across the state. This group of professionals annually flocks to the Travel Conference to learn about the latest trends, analyze current tourism efforts and hear about future plans to enhance Nebraska's tourism strategy. My compliments to Nebraska Tourism Director Dan Curran and his staff for planning and hosting such an outstanding educational event for our tourism partners.

While you may know that the Travel and Tourism Division is an instrumental part of the Department of Economic Development, very few recognize how it is funded. By statute, the State collects a 1% lodging tax on the sale of hotel/motel rooms and campground space to fund the Division. The same law allows counties in Nebraska to adopt up to a 4% tax to assist local tourism marketing and development. In the past fiscal year (July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004), \$2,715,825 was collected through the State 1% lodging tax. These dollars support an aggressive staff of 10 full-time tourism professionals and many part-time workers, special regional and state tourism publications and an extremely aggressive marketing and public relations campaign. I would also encourage you to peruse the interactive tourism web site at www.visitnebraska.org.

Nebraska's tourism budget is small compared to many states, as you might imagine. In FY 2003 - 04, Nebraska ranked 45 out of the 50 states in size of state tourism office budget. Surrounding states such as South Dakota (7,331,000), Missouri (15,067,743), Colorado (14,110,402), Kansas (4,252,362), and Iowa (3,537,544) operate on significantly larger budgets. With that said, I firmly believe that Nebraska's Travel and Tourism Division gets a very good return on investment. It is estimated that travelers spent more than \$2.8 billion in Nebraska during 2003 and made 19.5 million trips in the state on trips to destinations 100 miles or more from home.

I believe tourism presents some very unique development opportunities for Nebraska. Research increasingly shows that tourists are not so much turning to grand vacations, but rather are focusing their tourism disposable income on unique and niche types of tourist activities. This is especially true for residents of highly congested, fast-paced urban areas. For example, several of western Nebraska's progressive golf courses have experienced a great deal of success in developing a "Golf the West" package tour. This successful venture draws a large volume of its customer base from the Colorado Front Range. Similar development opportunities such as working ranches, bed and breakfasts, specialty gift stores, antique malls, etc. offer plenty of development and profit potential in both urban and rural parts of the state.

In looking at Nebraska's overall tourism program, one can also not forget our many wonderful attractions and special events. These facilities and events continue to support our state's unique culture and heritage while attracting outside investment and creating jobs for Nebraskans. As you consider your family's vacation plans for 2005, please consider making an all Nebraska vacation!

Richard J. Baier
Director

"I firmly believe that Nebraska's Tourism Division gets a very good return on investment. It is estimated that tourists spent more than \$2.8 billion in Nebraska during 2003. This figure represents more than 19 million trips to Nebraska and an average expenditure of \$364 per trip."

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Tourism Awards presented at 2004 Travel Conference

Nearly 200 tourism professionals were on hand to honor their peers at the annual tourism awards banquet in late October at the Gering Convention Center. The event capped the 29th Annual Nebraska Travel Conference organized by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's Travel and Tourism Division, and hosted by the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau and Scotts Bluff County Tourism.

Lt. Governor Dave Heineman presented the following:

The 2004 Henry Fonda Award--The state's highest tourism award representing leadership, vision, and dedication to the tourism industry--went to Marge Peterson, executive editor of AAA Home & Away magazine.

The Friend of Tourism Award was awarded to Hartington's Outdoorsmen Productions. **The Outstanding Web Site Award** was given to the city of Kimball.

The Outstanding Regional Association Award was given to the Highway 14 Association, which represents more than 100 members in communities in eight counties in east central Nebraska.

The Outstanding Tourism Publication Within the Travel Industry Award was won by the Grand Island/Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB).

The Outstanding Tourism Publication for the Consumer went to the York County Visitors Bureau.

The Outstanding Tourism Entity Award recognizes an attraction, facility, or museum that created an outstanding tourism promotional campaign during the last year. The winner was Cabela's.

The Outstanding Tourism Campaign Award was given to The Fremont Big Fish on the Platte Project.

The Outstanding New Event of 2004 went to the Tilden Prairie Days.

The Outstanding Event Award in a Community with a Population Over 20,000 went to the Stuhr Museum's Christmas Past and Present.

The Outstanding Event Award in a Community with a Population Between 5,000 and 19,000 was won by Lexington's Antique and Craft Extravaganza.

The Outstanding Event Award in a Community with a Population of Less Than 5,000 was won by Hartington's Candlelight Christmas.

David Hendee, a reporter with the Omaha World-Herald, was presented with the **2004 Tom Allan Travel Media Award** by the Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division for his efforts to educate and entertain readers about the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

Ross Greathouse of Lincoln was honored with the **Visionary Award** for his decades-long commitment to developing hiking and biking trails across the state.

Prior to the banquet, the Nebraska Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus presented **The Crystal Compass Award** to Sarah Focke with the Kearney Visitors Bureau. Another travel group, the Nebraska Travel Association presented its Frank Morrison Award to Nebraska State Senator LeRoy Loudon of Ellsworth.

For information, contact: Mary Ethel Emanuel at 800-228-4307, 402-471-3797, or e-mail: marye@visitnebraska.org.

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For information, contact: Mary Ethel Emanuel at 800-228-4307, 402-471-3797, or email: marye@visitnebraska.org.

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Marge Peterson received the Henry Fonda Award



Todd Kirshenbaum received the Outstanding Regional Associate



Connie Carrillo received the Outstanding Tourism Entity on behalf of Cabela's

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"The fact that we could move into a facility that was designed to meet our immediate needs, coupled with Superior's incentive package, available workforce, and a partnership of local and state organizations that did everything to assist us really convinced us that this is where we wanted to be."

Hasit Vibhakar,
Telesis chairman,
CEO and
president

Superior attracts new high tech company

Telesis Technology Corporation (OTC: TLST), a high technology company headquartered in Palmetto, Fla., announced today that it will expand its operations to Superior. The company provides a wide range of products, and system and service solutions for commercial and government clientele, specifically in the aerospace and defense industries. The project will create five full-time positions with the expectation of increasing staff to 17 by the end of the second year.

Telesis will initially set up a distribution center in Superior's 20,000 sq. ft. speculative building located in Kottmeyer Business Park. Company plans also call for eventually building a manufacturing facility in Superior.

Hasit Vibhakar, chairman, CEO, and president of Telesis, considered locations in several states. Before visiting Nebraska, he researched the state's available facilities, incentive programs, utility costs, and workforce availability, among other considerations.

"The fact that we could move into a facility that was designed to meet our immediate needs, coupled with Superior's incentive package, available workforce, and a partnership of local and state organizations that did everything to assist us really convinced us that this is where we wanted to be," Vibhakar said.

Partnering with Vibhakar and Mike Rogers, Telesis vice president of global sales, on the project were the city of Superior, Superior Economic Development Corporation, Nebraska Public Power District, and Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED). The city was awarded \$145,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding through DED's spec building program in 2002, and combined this funding with \$191,000 LB840 funding and a bank loan to construct the building. Superior also put together a strong incentive package for the company.

Telesis Technology Corporation maintains five operating divisions in Bradenton and Palmetto, Fla., Chapel Hill, N.C., New Delhi, India, and Singapore. The product- and customer-driven divisions are: Government Products, Commercial Products, Telesis Aerospace, Telesis Test Labs, and Telesis RF.

For information, contact: Sherry Kniep, Superior Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development, at 402-879-3419.

DED program briefing scheduled

Legislative staff, professional developers, community representatives and anyone else interested in economic development is invited to attend a DED program briefing, Tuesday, Dec. 7, 9 a.m.-Noon, in the Nebraska State Capitol, Room 1510. In addition to providing an overview of DED programs, staff will respond to questions and invite discussion about economic development in Nebraska.

"My observation is that many communities do not have sufficient knowledge about the assistance we can provide to them," said DED Director Richard Baier. "These periodic department briefings provide attendees with an opportunity to personally learn more about what is available, and to ask questions that relate to their particular needs." Baier also indicated that an important benefit is learning the names and phone numbers of staff who can provide direct assistance.

Created in 1967 by the Nebraska Legislature, the state's development agency currently employs approximately 70 staff, and provides programs with statewide and community components in business development and recruitment; community and rural development; and tourism development and promotion.

To attend, contact Kim Bastemeyer at 800-426-6505, 402-471-3746, or email: kbmeyer@neded.org. For general questions about the briefing, contact Stu Miller at 800-426-6505, 402-471-3783, or email: smiller@neded.org.

\$429,947 awarded to Grand Island for business expansion

Governor Mike Johanns has awarded \$429,947 in Community Development Block Grant funding to the city of Grand Island to help start up Standard Iron, Inc., a metal fabrication company. The project is expected to create a minimum of 38 new full-time jobs.

The CDBG funding will be combined with \$74,053 from Grand Island's CDBG program income reuse funds and loaned to Standard Iron, Inc. to purchase land in the South Platte Valley Industrial Park in Grand Island and build a 100,000 sq. ft. facility.

The project funding is part of a program directed by DED, which assists with the development of businesses and communities throughout the state. Federal funds are made available to Nebraska from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's CDBG program.

Additional funding of \$5.513 million from the Grand Island Area Economic Development Corporation, US Bank, Demeules Family Limited Partnership, and Standard Iron and Wire Works, Inc., in Monticello, Minn., will complete the project.

Standard Iron, Inc., is a subsidiary of Standard Iron and Wire Works, Inc., a company founded by Hector Demeules in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1930. Today, the company is run by Hector's three grandsons, Richard, Joseph, and William Demeules. Because the company had maximized its manufacturing capacity in its Minnesota manufacturing locations, the Demeules brothers were interested in expanding their business to a location that could readily accommodate clientele in Nebraska and Iowa. The new Grand Island location will take over a substantial amount of metal fabrication work from the Minnesota plant, and market its products and services to potential buyers throughout the region.

At the Grand Island facility, all metal work will be conducted on rolled or flat iron steel up to a half inch thick. The steel is placed on a table and fed by conveyor into a 4,000-watt laser where flat panels are precisely cut and edged, then attached to combines and other motorized units for use by major agricultural equipment companies. The company expects to match all equipment used at its Grand Island facility to that used at its Minnesota operations to maintain high quality and continuity in its fabricated steel products.

For information, contact: Stew Jobses at 308-390-3964, or email: sjobses@neded.org.

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Because the company had maximized its manufacturing capacity in its Minnesota manufacturing locations, the Demeules brothers were interested in expanding their business to a location that could readily accommodate clientele in Nebraska and Iowa. The new Grand Island location will take over a substantial amount of metal fabrication work from the Minnesota plant, and market its products and services to potential buyers throughout the region.

Dominissee graduates from the EDI



Lisa Dominissee of the Rural Development Commission became a graduate of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute (OU/EDI) on October 29, 2004 at the OU/EDI sessions held in Oklahoma City, Okla. OU/EDI is a three-session program, each one week long, which provides a broad spectrum of advanced education for the economic development professional.

OU/EDI classes focus on a variety of core and elective areas including Business Retention and Expansion, Real Estate Development and Reuse, Economic Development Financing,

Managing Economic Development Organizations, Strategic Planning, Marketing and other elective topics. Students must complete 117 hours of instruction selected from more than 50 seminars, workshops and discussion groups.

Begun in 1962, OU/EDI now has more than 3,200 graduates.

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Message from Diplomats President Mike Baldino



I am honored to serve this year as president of this prestigious organization. If you are considering becoming a Nebraska Diplomat, please take the time to explore our website at: <http://www.nediplomats.org/>. Also feel free to contact one of the members listed on the website or me to learn more about the value of becoming a Diplomat.

The Diplomats are business executives dedicated to growing Nebraska through their support of DED. More than 400 Nebraska Diplomats are engaged in activities that support the department. Their efforts include helping existing Nebraska businesses grow and expand, attracting new business to Nebraska, and working to improve Nebraska's business climate and competitiveness.

The Nebraska Diplomats have a great tradition of being active, vocal and constructive partners to the state's Department of Economic Development, and I pledge to continue that support and tradition.

Current Diplomats, we want you to know that the Diplomat Board, as well as the DED director appreciate your willingness to become involved in growing Nebraska. Dates for our three signature Diplomats events will be announced soon. These include:

- Legislative Briefing and Reception to be held in February 2005 in Lincoln. During this event, you will learn about the important economic development issues facing Nebraska. You also will have the opportunity to visit one-on-one with our legislators to share your concerns and ideas.
- Business and Industry Day will be held during Spring 2005 in Fremont to celebrate existing business. This event starts with an award luncheon followed by a tour of area businesses. The day will be capped off with a round of golf at the Fremont Golf Club.
- Passport Weekend is the Diplomats' premier event and will be held in early fall 2005 and coincide with a Nebraska football home game. Diplomats host guests from other states and worldwide who have expressed interest in investing in Nebraska. Along with the football game, this weekend is full of exciting activities that include a CEO Roundtable, annual banquet with the governor as our keynote speaker, and a tailgate party hosted by the governor and first lady at their residence.

Economic development means creating and retaining Nebraska jobs, and Diplomats know how important this effort is to maintaining Nebraska's "Good Life." It also is the way to make the "Good Life" even better.

As I think about this upcoming year and what I would like for us to accomplish, three objectives come to mind:

1. Continue to increase our statewide membership of business executives so that the Diplomats organization will remain vibrant well into the future.
2. Continue a relatively new tradition started by my predecessors to hold a series of statewide regional meetings. These meetings provide the opportunity for DED's director to learn what is important to business leaders in the communities and regions in which they live and work, and keep Nebraska Diplomats informed about issues affecting the state's competitive position.
3. Encourage Diplomats to speak up and share their views. We must counter threats to Nebraska's ability to create and retain jobs, as well as stimulate investment in the state. Professional economic developers tell us that we, as independent business leaders are more credible with prospects than are they, and I believe the same holds true with the public. Unfortunately, the virtues of economic development

"The Diplomats are business executives dedicated to growing Nebraska through their support of DED. More than 400 Nebraska Diplomats are engaged in activities that support the department. Their efforts include helping existing Nebraska businesses grow and expand, attracting new business to Nebraska, and working to improve Nebraska's business climate and competitiveness."

Mike Baldino,
Diplomats president

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are not always clear to the public. In fact, it is unfortunate that positive outcomes are sometimes distorted to appear negative.

Along with these objectives, I am excited about two additional initiatives that Diplomats will be undertaking this year:

1. Nebraska Alumni Celebration, on Saturday, Nov. 20, at the Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown Denver, Colo. This will be the first of what we hope will be a series of annual events to excite people with Nebraska ties to "explore their possibilities" here. Alumni of Nebraska's colleges and universities living along Colorado's front range will be invited to rediscover the "Good Life." Readily available Nebraska jobs in a variety of industries, as well as services and assistance for those interested in business start-ups or expansions in Nebraska, will be showcased. The celebration will be capped off with a dinner featuring Governor Mike Johanns and keynote speaker Jim Clifton, CEO, with the Gallup Organization.
2. The Governor's Economic Development Certified Community Program. At Gov. Johann's request, the Diplomats will coordinate this new Nebraska Economic Development initiative. This program was created to recognize community infrastructure readiness, as well as to prepare communities to better respond to existing and prospective business and industry needs...just the kind of program that we Diplomats can energize.

Again, thank you for the privilege to serve this tremendous organization. I look forward to working with our great board and many of you as you become more involved throughout the year.

Sincerely,
Mike Baldino
Diplomats President



Nebraska Diplomats, Inc.

Bridgeport, Gering get badly needed housing

People are clamoring to get into new housing being built in Bridgeport according to Nancy Bentley, Bridgeport housing authority executive director, who indicated while applications won't be taken until early spring 2005, she already has a waiting list of about 15 individuals. In addition to the new \$722,232 Court-house Villa development being built in Bridgeport, a mirror \$743, 443 development, Valacia North Villa, is being built in Gering just north of the existing Valacia Villa on 7th Street. Both projects feature six two-bedroom units with easy accessibility. Two of the six units will feature deluxe roll-in full shower rooms. All units will be furnished with stoves, refrigerators, washers and dryers, microwave ovens, dishwashers, central heat and air conditioning, and off street parking. The two facilities that should be completed by summer or fall 2005 will be available to special needs residents.

The Bridgeport project will benefit the local economy in several ways, said Bentley. It uses local funding, employs local construction workers, and will provide students with on-the-job training in construction and maintenance work.

DED Director Richard Baier expressed support for the project, calling his department a primary partner for contributing \$191,000. The project also received \$500,000 funding through the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA).

Funding for both projects was assisted with HOME funds from DED, Affordable Housing Program funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka, Kan., tax credits offered through NIFA and purchased by Midwest Housing Equity Group, and the Bridgeport Housing Authority and Scotts Bluff County Housing Authority. Platte Valley National Bank is providing the construction and permanent loans.

For housing application information, contact Nancy Bentley at 308-632-0473, or 308-262-1690.



(l to r) Richard Baier and Starr Lehl of DED, and Mark Smith, representing Platte Valley National Bank.

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Lean journey leads to success

Since March 2002, nearly a dozen Nebraska companies have encouraged and supported employees in their endeavor to follow the "Lean Pathways to Success." As a result, 38 employees have been trained in a variety of tools and services that are helping them take their employers to new heights in the areas of increased competitiveness, measuring performance, continual improvement achievements, and measurable performance and quality.

A Lean Enterprise is defined as producing more with existing resources by eliminating non-value added activities. Depending on a given company's needs, a variety of training opportunities exist for individual employees, said Renee Held, with the Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership through the University of Nebraska at Omaha. These include Lean 101, Lean Leadership (supplement to Lean Enterprise), Set-up Reduction, 5S-Workplace Organization, Value Stream Mapping, Cellular/Flow Manufacturing, Total Productive Maintenance, Pull Systems/Kanban, and Kaizen Blitz.

Receiving the latest certification in Lean training in June 2004 were: Larry Kobus and Andy Paprocki with Blazer Mfg. in Columbus; Donna Chmelka, JoAnn Hlavac, and John Vandenberg with Fargo/David City Mfg., in David City; Doug Batten, Joe Cook, Marie Kapels, and Tim Parker with Flexcon in Columbus; Sarah Cunningham with Technik Mfg., Inc., in Columbus; and DeWayne Gohl with West Pharmaceutical in Kearney. These companies and employees twice received grant funding from the Nebraska Department of Labor.

Other individuals who have completed anywhere from one to six related Lean tool and service training sessions are:

Columbus: Dan Broekemeier (already certified), Mark Dostal, Viator Heesacker, Gene Parry, and Dan Stuhr with Behlen Mfg.; Gordon Blaser, Rod Eberhardt, Brenda Greenlee, and Jeff Greisen, with Blazer Mfg.; Chad Hinze with Columbus Hydraulics Co.; Tom Jarecke with Flexcon; Donna Sturgeon with Technik Mfg. Inc.; Kevin Ainsworth with Torin/Columbus Hydraulics Co.; and Tom Feehan, Eugene Finecy, Michelle Thomas-Micek, Tim Mohrman, Lee Nickolite, Janet Osten, Jeff E. Zimmerman; and Daniel Zwiener with Torin Products in Columbus.

Gothenburg: Ty Phillips and Travis Wilkins with Baldwin Filters.

Kearney: Rick Douglas and Darren Spiels with Baldwin Filters.

Platte Center: Greg Cole and Ed Pallas with Shell Valley Companies.

Coordinated by DED and the Nebraska Industrial Competitiveness Alliance, the Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) within the U.S. Department of Commerce. Manufacturers who work with Nebraska MEP have made dramatic gains in creating and retaining jobs, increasing or retaining sales, realizing cost savings, and investing in modernization, including plant and equipment, information systems, and workforce and training. The center's services are available through staff and consultants located throughout the state. Nebraska MEP has been recognized by NIST with best rankings nationwide for its Investment Leverage Ratio, yielding solid evidence of performance and economic benefits with small- and medium-sized manufacturers.

To learn more about the available programs and services of Nebraska MEP or Lean Manufacturing, contact your nearest Nebraska MEP consultant at

<http://nics.neded.org/nics4.html>.



(l to r) front row: JoAnn Hlavac, Joe Cook, Donna Chmelka, Sarah Cunningham. 2nd row: John Vandenberg, Andy Paprocki, Marie Kapels, Larry Kobus, Tim Parker, DeWayne Gohl. Not pictured: Doug Batten

A Lean Enterprise is defined as producing more with existing resources by eliminating non-value added activities.

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\$2,804,852 to grow housing opportunities in NE Nebraska

DED has awarded \$2,804,852 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME, and Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund (NAHTF) money to 12 communities and non-profit entities working to expand affordable housing opportunities for residents in Nebraska's Northeast Investment Zone.

Of the amount, \$544,202 is from CDBG, \$1,844,650 is from HOME, and \$416,000 is from NAHTF. The following individual awards were made:

- City of Columbus--\$250,000 CDBG funds.
- Elkhorn Valley Community Development Corp., Norfolk--\$400,000 HOME funds.
- Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation, Winnebago-- \$200,000 HOME funds.
- City of Laurel--\$135,700 NAHTF money.
- Northeast Economic Development (NED) Inc., Norfolk--\$250,000 HOME funds.
- Northeast Housing Initiative, Inc., Allen--\$392,000 HOME funds
- Charles Place Homebuyer Project, Omaha--\$416,000 NAHTF money.
- Village of Pender--\$158,502 CDBG funds.
- Three Rivers Housing Development Corporation, Tekamah-- \$250,710 HOME funds.
- Wayne Community Housing Development Corporation, Wayne-- \$251,940 HOME funds.

For information, contact: Lara Huskey at 800-426-6505, 402-471-3759, or email: lhhuskey@neded.org.

\$308,000 to boost homeownership in Seward County

DED has awarded \$308,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to the city of Seward to implement a down payment assistance program for individuals, couples, or families wanting to purchase their first homes. The funding is part of the Nebraska Affordable Housing Program's efforts to expand housing opportunities for residents in Nebraska's Southeast Investment Zone.

The Homeownership Opportunity Program will be implemented by the Seward County Housing Corporation, Inc., under a sub-recipient agreement with the city, and made available to 20 new homebuyers who purchase homes within any of 10 communities, and rural unincorporated areas, throughout Seward County. Prospective homebuyers earning incomes at or below 80 percent of the area median household income for Seward County will be considered for assistance.

The program's objective is to provide financial assistance to low- and moderate-income persons and families demonstrating greatest need so that they may purchase safe, decent, sanitary and affordable single-family residential units. Seward housing officials expect the program to ultimately lead to increasing the attractiveness of underdeveloped neighborhoods, boosting local employment, promoting homeownership throughout the area, and increasing the availability of quality, affordable housing.

For information, contact: Lara Huskey at 800-426-6505, 402-471-3759, or email: lhhuskey@neded.org.

Lincoln economic developer earns certification

Jason Smith, director of business development for the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development, was one of 14 individuals among 35 candidates to recently receive his CEcD—certification designation during the 2004 Annual Conference in St. Louis, Mo.

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Tim White, Grand Island

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New catalog devoted to Nebraska-made products

GROW Nebraska and *Nebraska Life Magazine* have collaborated on production and printing of a new full-color Buy GROW Nebraska Catalog 2004-2005 that features 137 Nebraska entrepreneurs and their unique products.

"We truly want to build an entrepreneurial brand for Nebraska and set a precedent for Nebraska as the entrepreneurial headquarters," Janell Anderson Ehrke, GROW Nebraska director, said. She cited examples, such as Cabela's that originated in Sidney, and The Buckle of Kearney, both which serve as benchmarks for Nebraska entrepreneurs.

"What GROW Nebraska has done with its marketing services for members and new catalog is to unify its product selection process in such a professional way that it can readily compete with others," Chris Amundson, *Nebraska Life* editor, said. "They are promoting true economic development across Nebraska."

Since 1998, the nonprofit GROW Nebraska has focused on maximizing Nebraska's entrepreneurial spirit and building Nebraska businesses globally by providing sustainable business environments through marketing, education, business building services, and access to markets. To learn more about GROW Nebraska, or Nebraska entrepreneurs, visit its' website: www.grownebraska.com.

For information, contact: Janell Anderson Ehrke at 888-GROWNEB (476-9632), or email: janell@growneb.com.



The mission of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development is: to develop economic opportunities by keeping Nebraska businesses, communities and people competitive.

Richard Baier, Director
Stuart Miller, Deputy Director of Economic Development Strategy & Policy Implementation
Gary Hamer, Deputy Director of Operations
Patty Wood, Marketing Director
Susan Sitzmann, Editor

Mike Johanns, Governor

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