

## ***Western Nebraska Entrepreneurial Initiative”***

### **Scotts Bluff County (Cities of Scottsbluff, Gering, Bridgeport and Mitchell)**

Rawnda Pierce, executive director of Twin Cities Development Association, Inc. in Scottsbluff, Neb., is very knowledgeable about the good things being done through BECA grants.

Twin Cities Development Association applied for and received a \$28,000 BECA grant, on behalf of itself, Western Nebraska Community College, Scotts Bluff County, the cities of Scottsbluff, Gering, Bridgeport and Mitchell, and the village of Morrill to kick start the Western Nebraska Entrepreneurial Initiative. In its formative stages, the Initiative has created a program to educate and technically assist young small business owners and entrepreneurs. Twin Cities prepared the grant application, while the other partnering organizations pledged funds to match the grant amount, providing the initiative with a solid financial base to really make a difference.

“Scottsbluff/Gering has sponsored summer E-camps for 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders for the past two summers. Separate camps, including robotics camp, builder’s camp, writer’s/artist’s camp, Entrepreneur for a Day camp, Make it and Market it camps, and Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow camps have all grown in yearly enrollment and new material. This year, we’re trying to get local contractors to offer “hands on” construction trades workshops. We hope to offer one day where kids learn about electricity, plumbing, HVAC, GPS and surveying, and one day where kids actually build a product,” Pierce said. “Many of these are programs we cannot offer within our normal budgets. Without these funds, we struggle to think how we would have funded these projects at the level that [together] we were able to achieve.”

As recently as last December, Scottsbluff/Gering received a \$70,000 BECA grant to market a new workforce recruitment Web site: [www.wehavejobs.net](http://www.wehavejobs.net). “The BECA grant enables us to reach a broader target audience and enhance our marketing campaign to reach potential workers outside the immediate area,” Pierce said. “We have been to eight college fairs this past February and March alone. And the grant funds allowed us to purchase professional marketing materials to promote the Web site. We are now in the process of obtaining bids to place billboards along the Front Range, and develop cable ads that can be run in various economically hard hit areas, such as Detroit.”