

Special points of interest:

See the information about Nebraska's BIT Mobile—pg 2

COMMISSION WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Governor Heineman has appointed three new representatives to the Rural Development Commission. Their terms will begin on July 1, 2006.

The Commission is pleased to welcome:

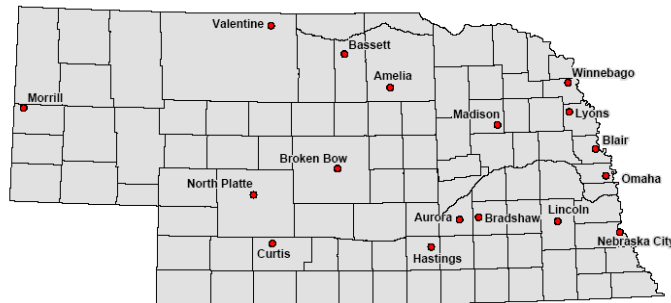
Robert Gustafson, Valentine, has been involved in local and regional economic development for many years from his position with First National Bank of Valentine.

Chuck Karpf, Morrill, is the Director of the Entrepreneur and Discovery Program for Western Community College in Scottsbluff. Chuck's been active in a variety of community and economic development activities throughout the state.

Larry Cooper, Curtis, is the Assistant Admissions Coordinator at the University of Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. Larry has a background in agriculture and works with youth across Nebraska.

Also, reappointed to serve on the Commission is **Heidi Phillips**, Bassett. Heidi is the Director of the Central Nebraska Economic Development District, a 15 county organization focusing on community and economic development.

Nebraska Rural Development Commissioners



● Commission Member Locations

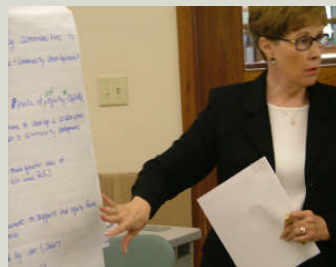
DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Busy seemed to be the operative word at the RDC office. May found me presenting the grantwriting workshops in Norfolk, Nebraska City, and statewide via teleconference. Lots of good suggestions for future program clarifications.

Sandi kept the home fires burning while I attended the Association for Enterprise Opportunity conference in Atlanta and visited with the State of Georgia about their Entrepreneurial Friendly communities program.

The BECA and VAA grant application forms were updated and placed online with news releases about the new deadlines. Thanks to several organizations in the state

(Nebraska Economic Developers Association, Center for Rural Affairs, NEON, and the Nebraska Development List serve) for helping us spread the word about the grant opportunities.



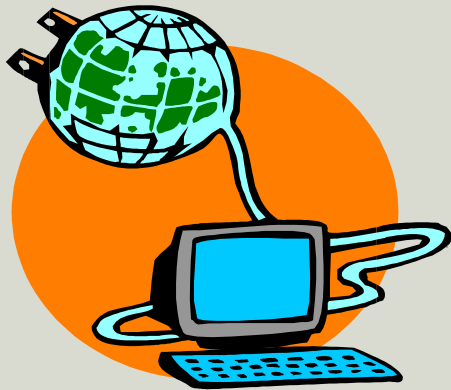
Thanks again to DeEtta Hartman for facilitating our work plan session in Gothenburg.

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MEET THE RESOURCES

UNL Extension BIT Mobile



Nebraskans have state-of-the-art technology and high-speed Internet access at their finger tips as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension's BIT Mobile navigates across the state.

The Business Information Technology Mobile, or BIT Mobile, is a traveling technology classroom offering rural communities that otherwise wouldn't have the facilities the ability to take a variety of business and information technology classes and training, said Connie Hancock, UNL Extension educator in Cheyenne, Kimball and Banner counties.

Hancock and several other UNL Extension information technology educators have been developing this idea for several years. They offer training on everything from basic teleliteracy skills to more advanced training, such as developing an on-line store.

"We've been teaching these (information technology) classes for several years, but in a lot of rural communities we are not able to get in because there isn't a computer lab," Hancock said. "Also, in communities that do

have computer labs available, we often find they are being used by younger people. Finally, the BIT mobile will eliminate people having to drive long distances for classes because we bring the classroom to them."

Educators also will work with local governments to boost communities' Web presence and local government services.

Although a lot of the classes will cater to adults, Hancock said extension also is working on a youth component of the BIT Mobile whether it be school activities or training for a potential work environment.

The BIT Mobile will be used by agricultural producers to help them develop skills to market their products and enhance their operations.

"The goal is to help all Nebraskans enhance their economic vitality," Hancock said.

"We want to take our land-grant mission to the people," Hancock said.

The 29-by-9-foot gray trailer with Husker red lettering contains 14 laptop computers, a file server, and other IT educational tools to enhance teaching methods.

Classes and workshops offered include topics such as e-business and e-government, precision agriculture, digital photography, word processing, spreadsheets and more.

Extension educators also hope to use the BIT Mobile to demonstrate the potential benefit of high speed/broadband and Internet access for business owners, agricultural producers, libraries, economic development groups, local governments and more.

For more information about the BIT mobile or to schedule it for an information technology class in your community, call (800) 328-2851 and a representative will provide more information or call Connie Hancock, UNL Extension Educator at 308-254-4455.

Note: This information was provided by Connie Hancock at my request. I recently had a chance to tour the BIT Mobile and was very impressed with the opportunity this offers any Nebraska community.

PARTNERS AND PROGRAMS

May was another busy networking month. See Lessons Learned for information from the Association for Enterprise Opportunity conference.

Other activities this month included partnering with the Department of Economic Development's Rural Community Development Initiative grantwriting workshops to deliver information about the BECA and VAA grants. To date about 100 people have attended the trainings.

The Partnership for Rural Nebraska had a meeting which included a presentation from the Department of Roads on some of their programs. I also participated in the Partners for Rural America board meeting (via teleconference).

The RDC participated in the Department of Economic Development briefing held in North Platte and presented information on the BECA and VAA grants.

Partnering with the Nebraska Development Network and the Partnership for Rural Nebraska, we will be as-

sisting in some listening sessions to help re-energize the central and the Panhandle regional networks. Later in the year, we will visit other existing networks to learn about their opportunities and challenges.



LESSONS LEARNED

The **Association for Enterprise Opportunity** annual conference was held in Atlanta, GA, the week of May 14.

The networking that takes place at national meetings is always invaluable and Nebraska was well-represented with staff from the RDC, the Center for Rural Affairs, and the Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership in addition to several regional or community agencies. It was great to know that once again Nebraska is considered a leader with its variety of programs and state-funded support for microenterprise.

Microenterprise (those businesses with five or fewer employees), is easier to define than entrepreneurs but clearly many microenterprises are also entrepreneurs.

Jon Bailey, Center for Rural Affairs, presented an overview of the proposed 2007 Farm Bill which is helpful in understanding the complexities and possible ramifications of federal actions.

The conference offered a wide variety of session topics, some topic specific tours, and showcased Georgia's microenterprise businesses one evening.

While in Georgia, I had a chance to further investigate their **Entrepreneurial Friendly** community designation process. I was able to visit with a representative of the Department of Economic Development and also the Director of the program.

Their program has several goals, including:

- Serving as a small business liaison to all state agencies to help eliminate obstacles
- Working with communities so they become a resource to their entrepreneurs
- Helping communities learn to identify entrepreneurs and microbusinesses
- Building local development strategies based on community assets including endowments for business assistance
- Helping communities to encourage business succession planning
- Matching youth with exiting businesses for retention of both business and young adults.

COMMISSION CORNER



Photos from the Commission strategic planning session in Gothenburg.



Remember if you have represented the RDC or been highlighted at some public function, please share the information with the Commission

RDC VISION

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission seeks, through advocacy and action, to improve the quality of life in rural Nebraska

RDC MISSION

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission is a voice for rural Nebraska communities in the creation of laws, policies and other initiatives that affect their economic, civic, and social conditions and foster cooperation and understanding among all agencies and organizations, public and private. The duties of the Commission are to:

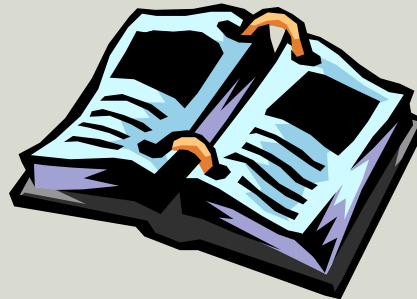
- Focus attention on and increase awareness of opportunities and needs of rural Nebraskans
- Strengthen community sustainability and growth in rural Nebraska through increased community-based wealth creation, expanded economic opportunity and improved quality of life
- Stimulate rural development innovation and foster information transfer to, from and within rural Nebraska
- Ensure that rural Nebraskans are afforded the opportunity to determine rural Nebraska's development agenda
- Foster community-based development initiatives through multi-community partnerships

CALENDAR CORNER

June 20—Bridgeport -Panhandle regional network listening session
June 28— July 5 Linda on vacation
June 30—announce VAA grants
July 4— Holiday
July 12—Lincoln—Partnership for Rural Nebraska
August 1—**BECA grant deadline—noon**
August 7—**VAA grant deadline—noon**
September 4—Holiday
September 14—Kearney—Department of Economic Development briefing
September 19-21 -Ainsworth—Rural Institute

COMMISSION MEETINGS:

June 7—North Platte
October 11—Hastings



Rural Development Commission



rdc.neded.org

402 East State Farm Rd
PO Box 310
North Platte, NE 69101
308-749-2291 (phone)
308-749-2223 (fax)
Linda.fettig@ded.ne.gov