



# 1999 Top 10 & Outstanding 100 Rural Development Initiatives

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission is pleased to again release its Nebraska *Top 10 and Outstanding 100 Rural Development Initiatives Report*. These efforts represent innovation and excellence in support of the development of rural Nebraska. These initiatives illustrate the progress that continues to be realized throughout rural Nebraska. Across the state, rural citizens are dreaming of a better tomorrow for themselves, their children and their communities and are working hard to create the “Good Life” here on the Great Plains.

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# Table of Contents

Page	Report Section
2	About the Report
2	Federal Acknowledgment of Support and Disclaimer
3	About the Commission
4	1999 Top 10 Rural Development Initiatives
7	Panhandle Region Initiatives
9	Old West Region Initiatives
10	Southwest Region Initiatives
11	Central Region Initiatives
13	North Central Region Initiatives
14	Northeast Region Initiatives
16	Southeast Region Initiatives
18	Statewide Initiatives
21	National Rural Development Initiatives

**The Nebraska Rural Development Commission would like to express its sincere thanks and appreciation to the Nebraska Rural Electric Association for their sponsorship of the Nebraska Top 10 and Outstanding 100 Rural Development Initiatives Report and for the good work they do in rural Nebraska.**

Drop in  
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from 1998  
Rural Development  
Initiatives  
project

#### **About this Report**

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission believes that celebrating success is important to our efforts to develop “One Nebraska.” The Commission's annual *Top 10 and Outstanding 100 Rural Development Initiatives* Report celebrates the diversity of development occurring throughout the Cornhusker State. This recognition is not a competition, but an attempt to share with all of Nebraska the good things happening in our rural communities.

#### **Federal Acknowledgment of Support and Disclaimer**

This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under Agreement 43-3AEN-2-80123. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**History**

Governor E. Benjamin Nelson, by Executive Order 91-1, created the Nebraska Rural Development Commission in January 1991. Legislative Bill 190, passed by the Nebraska Legislature in May, 1993 codified the Commission as a non-code state agency and linked it administratively with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Recognizing that the Commission has a mission and purpose broader than just economic development, the Legislature passed LB 1053 in April, 1998 to remove the administrative link with the Department of Economic Development.

**Mission**

The purpose of the Commission shall be to foster sustainable community and economic development initiatives. These initiatives should enable Nebraska communities to realize their own goals, thereby contributing to the growth and well-being of the entire state.

**National Rural Development Partnership**

The Commission is affiliated with the National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP). NRDP is a national partnership of states and the national government to support effective development throughout rural America.

**Rural News Bits**

The result of a cooperative arrangement between several organizations devoted to rural development, Rural News Bits is a monthly newsletter which has replaced the Commission's Rural Partners newsletter. Anyone can receive Rural News Bits by contacting the Commission's office.

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# 1999 TOP 10 Rural Development Initiatives

## **Introduction**

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission is honored to recognize the 1999 Top 10 Rural Development Initiatives. These are the ten development initiatives selected by the Commission for special recognition as examples of outstanding rural development activity (in alphabetical order). There are a great number of worthy initiatives and projects that are not recognized on this year's list. The Commission would like to salute all those groups and individuals who continue to build better communities in rural Nebraska.

## **Ainsworth Middle School Nature Trail Project**

Two years ago, instructors at Ainsworth Middle School began an ambitious integrated project within their classes to construct a hiking trail. The students surveyed an area near Pine Creek, they built steps and bridges, widened a pathway through the canyon, and covered the trail with wood chips. Sixty-five students, along with teachers from different disciplines, helped with the project. A total of 3,000 students and 200 school staff hours went into the project. Other organizations and businesses also assisted with the construction of the trail. Permanent signs, benches, picnic tables, and additional stairway improvements are currently being constructed. The entire project has created a sense of pride among the students and provided a much appreciated nature trail experience for individuals visiting the park. Contact Marjorie Wilkins, 402.387.2082.

## **Ainsworth Project World Series**

Regional collaboration was the key to Ainsworth's success in bringing Advantage Receivable Solutions to Ainsworth. Advantage Receivable Solutions is an accounts receivable company for the telecommunications, health care and financial services industries. The regional collaboration project, called the "Ainsworth Project World Series" was a success due to the collective energy supplied by the many organizations involved in the group, as well as the many volunteers and businesses. The regional groups worked together to bring economic diversity and much needed employment to the benefit of all in North Central Nebraska. Contact Sheryl Hiatt, 402.684.3346.

## **Box Butte General Hospital, Alliance**

Over the past four years, the Box Butte General Hospital has conducted a "listening" campaign. The philosophy of the hospital administration was to listen to the public and respond to their needs. As a result, three new programs were started that addressed the community's needs. The "Ailing Angels" program was developed to provide an alternative for working parents who have sick children between the ages of 3 months to 18 years. "A Women's Heart" conference was held to offer an overview of heart disease specific to women and its prevention. Finally, a partnership between the Hospital and the Cow Country Community Foundation was reached that provides for a fully staffed medical clinic in Hyannis and the surrounding rural area. All three of these projects combined the values of listening to the community and the establishment of regional partnerships. Contact T. J. Padden, 308.762.6660.

## **Buffalo Commons Storytelling Festival, McCook**

The Buffalo Commons Storytelling Festival, held the first weekend after Memorial Day, drew visitors from across the Southwest Nebraska area and beyond. Local storytellers, as well as those from other areas of the state and nation provided for the "storytelling" entertainment. The 1999 Festival theme, "The American Experience", brought together many generations to share their stories, including those at the Kids Fest. The storytellers had varied backgrounds and histories, they have may be railroaders, veterans, Native Americans, settlers, cowboys, historians, humorists, farmers or someone who just wanted to tell a story. Several hundred visitors attended the two-day festival and the committee is now busy planning for an even larger event in 2000. Contact Cloyd Clark, 308.345.2452.

# 1999 TOP 10 Rural Development Initiatives

## **Pawnee City Downtown Improvement Project**

One of the public recommendations made during the 1996 Nebraska Tourism Industry Development Plan was to “complete the physical redevelopment of Pawnee City’s historic downtown district.” Work began in the fall of 1998 and within a year, the revitalization of the Historic District in downtown Pawnee City was completed. The downtown project consisted of a six-block area. This area received new streets, sewer lines and sidewalks with handicap accessibility. Additionally, through the many individual donations, Victorian lights were once again placed around the Courthouse square and in the downtown area. Pawnee City has forty-eight of the fifty-six commercial buildings in this district listed on the National Historic Register, including the Pawnee County Courthouse. Contact L. Joe Stehlik, 402.852.2973.

## **Southwest Nebraska Dairy Development Partnership, Palisade**

The Southwest Nebraska Dairy Development Partnership was formed to attract new dairy operations to the southwest region and to provide for value-added agricultural and employment opportunities. The Partnership, which includes power districts, financial institutions, economic development groups, pooled their resources to conduct activities such as participating in farm shows, direct mailings, development of promotional materials, follow-up contacts, and hosting visiting dairy operators. Their hard work has paid off. Three dairies have already located or are locating within the Southwest region as a result of the Partnership’s efforts. Contact Frank Potthoff, 308.285.3307.

## **Steamboat Trace Hiking/Biking Trail**

After nearly five years of planning and design, the Steamboat Trace Hiking/Biking Trail is now open throughout its total 21-mile corridor. October 1998 saw the opening of the southern half from Peru to Brownville. One year later, the northern half, from Peru to Minersville, south of Nebraska City, was dedicated. The total project costs was approximately \$1 million dollars. Steamboat Trail is a testimony of the power of partnering. While the owner and manager of the trail is the Nemaha Natural Resources District, many other organizations and agencies contributed to its success, including Boy Scout troops and volunteers who spent over 2,000 hours on bridge decking and clearing debris. The Steamboat Trace Association coordinated many of these volunteer activities and raised over \$20,000 in local contributions for construction and promotion. Another local group, the Peru Depot Gandies, was instrumental in the development trail facilities at Peru, including picnic and parking area, guidebooks, and trailhead markers. Many local groups continue to work on the Trail and are striving to make the Trail one of the premier sites in Nebraska. Contact Howard H. McNiff, 402.335.3347.

## **Valley County Historical Society, Ord**

During the 1999 Labor Day weekend, the citizens of Ord stepped back in time with special events sponsored by the Valley County Historical Society. A Cotillion was held at Fort Hartsuff, to aid in their celebration of their 125th Anniversary. The Cotillion was an opportunity for people of all ages to dress in costume, ranging from the Victorian to the Bobby Sox eras. Even students from the University of Nebraska at Omaha used the historical event to conduct research and participate in the Cotillion wearing period clothing. An old-fashion riverside church service was held at Anderson Island and the weekend ended with a vintage baseball game between the Ord Tiger team and the Railroad Town Rowdies from the Stuhr Museum. Special baseball cards were made of the Tigers, including their fictional names and biographies, and sold at the game. Contact Steffan Baker, 308.728.7046.

# 1999 TOP 10 Rural Development Initiatives

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## **Village of Johnstown**

Johnstown, a small North Central Nebraska community, is doing great things with so few people...“about 48” according to the nomination. Johnstown is a community with a lot of heart and a determination to keep their community alive. Projects for 1999 included renovation of the old fire hall for the village office, replacement of sidewalks, and general repairs and painting of town buildings. Johnstown was also host to the Brown County Fair, which featured two Top 10 Country music stars. The new community center served as the gathering spot for the community’s Country BBQs and dances. Also in 1999, nine homes were renovated through a special housing grant with Woodlake, Cody and Nezel. Many volunteers, young and old, work to keep Johnstown as a community of which they can be proud. Contact Gayle Magary, 402.722.4296.

## **Village of Petersburg**

The community of Petersburg came together in 1999 to revitalize and beautify their community of 388 people. Projects completed during 1999 included the construction of community welcome signs; expansion of the Petersburg’s Locker to specialty meats and sponsorship of the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Nebraska State Antique Tractor and Horse Plowing Bee. The Bee was a special event that brought together children and senior citizens alike for a day of fun and activity. Other events included a drive to keep the Petersburg Public School open, fundraising efforts for the volunteer fire department and EMT’s, a pancake brunch for Rural Friendship Day, and the formation of a new youth group. Petersburg truly is a community that lives the values for which Nebraska is well noted. Contact Bernie Cunningham, 402.386.5368.

### **Bayard Chimney Rock Museum**

On June 1, 1999, the Chimney Rock Museum in Bayard opened in the old Burlington Northern depot, which was destined for demolition. The museum displays items from Bayard's past, including antique farm equipment, tools, clothing, photographs, and family histories shown on quilt blocks. The history of sugar beet harvesting is also displayed at the museum. Contact Bill Logston, 308.586.1177.

### **Buzzword, Morrill**

The Buzzword, published monthly by the Morrill High School Journalism class, was started to improve the communication of local news items in the communities of Morrill, Henry and Lyman. The monthly newspaper was started with funds from the School at the Center project and is freely distributed in all three communities. As grant funds run out, the journalism class plans to sell advertising to support the publication. Contact Ron Kunch, 308.247.3132.

### **Cattleman's Ball, Lexington**

Billed as one of the premier events in Nebraska, the Cattleman's Ball annually raises monies for the Eppley Cancer Research Center in Omaha and community medical services. The 1999 event was held at the Robb Ranch, near Lexington. Approximately 3000 people attended the one day event and donated \$175,000. Ten percent of the donations were dedicated to the Emergency Medical Services of Lexington and Johnson Lake, development of an outdoor recreational complex, and the Oncology Program at Tri-County Hospital.

### **Chadron YouthBuild Program**

The Chadron YouthBuild Program was the first rural YouthBuild Program to be funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Program, which is an educational, leadership development and job-training program, began in 1999. Ten participants, ranging in age from 15 to 24, completed rehabilitation of two homes in Chadron for low to moderate income families. Contact Marguerite Vey Miller, 308.432.4346.

### **City of Chadron**

Promotion of tourism and economic development was one of the key activities for the City of Chadron in 1999. Tourism highlights included the Museum of the Fur Trade, Fur Trade Days in July, the Annual Spring Quilt Show, the Mari Sandoz Heritage Room at Chadron State College, and mountain biking in the Pine Ridge. Economic development efforts included housing projects, Microtel Inn & Suites, Super Wal-Mart, Angela's Eatery, and Congar Systems. Contact Jeana Lam Pickett, 308.432.4401.

### **EDGE Youth Project, Kimball**

The EDGE (Education, Diversity, Goals, and Entertainment) Youth Center plays a key role in the lives of Kimball's youth. The Youth Center provides area students a place for games, activities, dances, and educational opportunities using the Center's computers and tutoring options. A Bike Club was also created for old bike donations and repairs. Adults volunteer their time at the Center and provide a valuable mentoring program to Kimball's youth. Contact Steve Trevino, 308.235.3135.

### **Lincoln House Apartments, Scottsbluff**

The former Lincoln Hotel, built in 1918 in Scottsbluff, was once the "grand hotel" of the Panhandle. The tallest building in Scottsbluff, the Lincoln Hotel sat vacant since 1983 and was destined for demolition. Thanks to the work of many individuals and investors, the grand hotel is again open for business as an elegant, affordable 35-unit housing complex for the elderly. The Lincoln House is one of several renovation projects underway or near completion in Scottsbluff. Contact Cindy Dickinson, 308.630.6249.

### **Monument Valley Pathways Project, Scottsbluff**

In 1990, the non-profit Monument Valley Pathways Project developed a plan for the building of a pathway along the scenic North Platte River which would tie together the major recreational facilities in Scottsbluff. Each year the pathway project continues to advance towards its goal of a completed 26-mile long path that reaches Scotts Bluff National Monument and circles back to the beginning of the path along the North Platte River. Contact Cindy Dickinson or Don Kearney, 308.630.6249.

**National Antique Tractor Pull Championship, Ogallala**

The National Antique Tractor Pull Championship began in 1998 to promote economic activity within Ogallala and the surrounding area. The Tractor Pull, a two-day event, is held indoors in December. The first day consists of the National/Regional Antique Tractor Pull with the State of Nebraska Antique Tractor Pull on the following day. In 1999, there were 432 pulls in a two-day period with participants and visitors coming from 12 states. Contact Jim Glenn, 308.284.4066.

**Oregon Trail Days, Gering**

The 79<sup>th</sup> annual Oregon Trail Days was a four-day extravaganza that drew more than 30,000 people to Gering Nebraska. The Oregon Trail Days is often referred to as Nebraska’s oldest continuing celebration. More 800 volunteers worked to make this event one to remember. Activities at the Trail Days included an Old Settlers two-day reunion, parades, barbecues, street dances, concerts, International food fair, melodramas, and the state championship CASI chili cook-off. Contact Nadine Sieb, 308.436.6886.

**Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services**

The Panhandle Partnership is an excellent example of agencies and communities working together to meet a common goal—the betterment of the health and well-being of its citizens. Accomplishments of the Partnership include a Children’s Outreach Program, collaborative relationships with the Native American community and support of the Border Tiospaye, combined resources for community planning in 11 counties, and promotion of health insurance for rural families through the Robert Wood Johnson Connecting Kids Project. Contact Joan Frances, 308.235.4211; [joanf@megavision.com](mailto:joanf@megavision.com).

**Panhandle South Museum Alliance**

A group of ten museums and attractions in the Panhandle are working together to increase visitation and awareness of the different activities in the area. The Alliance created brochures, maps, discount cards, and many other helpful items for promoting area attractions. Members of the Alliance donated their expertise and time to help other members. Through the coordinated efforts of the Alliance, area attractions have experienced an increase in the number of visitors. Contact Jolen Kaufman, 308.436.2975.

**Partners Hay Marketing Cooperative, Kimball**

Through the efforts of the PARTNERS Project, Kimball area alfalfa producers and business owners worked together to create the area's first hay marketing cooperative. Incorporated in 1999, the cooperative has since found markets for its members’ alfalfa, arranged for testing of each cutting, and coordinated the transportation of all alfalfa sold. Financing the operation of the Cooperative is possible by holding a “retain per ton sold” when the payment is made to the producer. Contact Gene Purdy, 308.235.3633.

**Renaissance Project, Kimball**

Now in its fourth year, the Kimball Renaissance Project continues to target community leadership development for adults and youth alike. Youth activities include mentoring programs, Junior Achievement, Celebrate the Panhandle, community volunteerism, and Youth Empowerment. Community enhancements include arts and humanities activities, Nebraska Community Improvement Program projects and Lied Mainstreet membership. The Renaissance Project has served as a catalyst for a variety of community endeavors including personal and community enrichment and economic expansion. Contact Fredene Pietsch, 308.235.3633.

**Sheridan County Community Builders Housing Initiative**

The Sheridan County Housing Initiative started in 1999 in response to an area shortage of skilled construction labor and the need to educate young people about the opportunities that exist for careers and employment. Funded through a grant from Nebraska Department of Economic Development’s Partnership for Economic Development Act, the Initiative subsidized the wages of youth workers hired by contractors working in Sheridan County. The youth workers gained real, hands-on training and contractors gained the extra help they needed. Contact Deb Cottier, 308.432.4881.

**Arthur County Students in Action**

Youth involvement in community activities is crucial to the welfare of a small community. Just ask anyone in the small community of Arthur. Through the efforts of high school students, Arthur continues to explore options on re-opening a local grocery store. In 1999, a community-wide survey was conducted by students, followed by a student sponsored community meeting in which more than 95 individuals attended. Contact Patricia Steel, 308.764.2268

**C.R.E.W. School-to-Work Partnership, North Platte**

C.R.E.W. School-to-Work partnership is taking the mission of rural development and workforce preparation to 17 communities via schools and their students. In 1999, the Partnership activities impacted over 8,000 students in 18 school districts within an eight-county area. Students are offered dynamic career awareness and work readiness activities through work-based learning, school-based learning, and connecting activities. Contact Jane O. Hornung, 308.534.1632.

**Ogallala Main Street**

Promotion of Ogallala's downtown business district was a little more challenging last year due to major road construction. However, through the efforts of the program and its many volunteers, business went on as usual. The Ogallala Main Street's mission is to revitalize the core business district by enhancing the profitability of downtown's businesses; promoting downtown's unique historic resources; and making downtown accessible to all residents and visitors by improving cooperation through an ongoing organizational process. Contact Kathy Zeller, 308.284.4066

**Stapleton Public Golf Course, Stapleton**

After one and a half years, the Stapleton Public Golf Course, located on a former cattle pasture, is finally a reality. Over 4,500 volunteer hours and loaned equipment were used to create this golf course. Sponsorship of the course's nine holes by local and area businesses provided for benches and other equipment and more than 150 trees were planted by community volunteers. Three successful tournaments were held last year. Contact Larry Salisbury, 308.636.2461 or Bill Sazama, 308.636.2997.

**Sutherland Ethanol Plant, Sutherland**

In February of 1999, the Delta T Corporation of Williamsburg, VA and several other partners (now Sutherland Associates, LLC) purchased the defunct Sutherland Ethanol Plant. The facility has since been completely remodeled and is now producing ethanol. Not only is the plant a major consumer of corn in the Lincoln County area, but it has also produced over 30 new jobs. Contact Richard J. Baier.

**Village of Wallace**

The Village of Wallace has been busy this past year developing and improving their community of 308 people. Their accomplishments include resurfacing of village streets, a new water tower, new waterpipes and hydrants, renovation of the community hall, new library services and housing, the Fall Festival, and the development of a local theater group. The community hall is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Contact Rich Psota, 308.387.4319.

### **Ag Connections – Reaching Women in Agriculture, Grant**

In February 1999, Grant hosted the first annual Ag Connections – Reaching Women in Agriculture workshop. Over 90 women from Nebraska and Colorado took part in the day’s events which included presentations on farm marketing, USDA farm programs, stress management, estate planning, and an entertaining ‘classic’ style show. Contact Claudia Stevenson, 308.352.4776.

### **Maywood Community Hall**

The Maywood Community Hall has served as the community meeting, convention and school hub for almost fifty years. It was planned, designed, built and completed with almost all-volunteer effort, not only once, but twice, as fire destroyed almost all of the first structure in 1951. The Village of Maywood, the school, and the Community Hall board continue to work together to keep this viable project improving and updated with today’s standards. Contact Lynne Wilson, 308.362.4282.

### **Massacre Canyon Visitor’s Center, Trenton**

Learn the history of the Pawnee and Sioux tribes at the Massacre Canyon Visitor Center. Opened in 1999, the Center features the battle of Massacre Canyon and contains displays on Southwest Nebraska’s rich history. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission also provides information about the abundant outdoor recreational opportunities available in the area.

### **Nelson Institute, McCook**

The Nelson Institute was created in 1998 by Former Governor Ben Nelson. The goals of the Nelson Institute are to support efforts which promote understanding and development of unity, creation of an endowment which will eventually fund an “Innovation Grants Program” to provide seed grants for projects in leadership development, economic development, community collaboration and community mentoring; and support the creation of a program to retain our youth by training them in the value of building communities through the Nelson Fellows Program. Contact Vicki Leibbrandt, 308.345.6303.

### **Sehnert’s Bakery and Bieroc Cafe, McCook**

The owners of Sehnert’s Bakery, Matt & Shelly Sehnert, can boast of 478 years of a bakery tradition. Its not that they’re that old, they just brought to McCook a family tradition that has been passed down from many generations. In 1999, Sehnert’s expanded their business and opened the Bieroc Café, a gourmet sandwich and espresso shop, in a building that once housed the original post office. The expansion provided 4 new positions to the McCook economy. Contact Matt and Shelley Sehnert, 308.345.6500

### **Village of Stratton**

The Stratton Development Committee set a goal of raising \$60,000 for community improvements in the areas of beautification, housing, business and industrial development, public relations, grants, and recreation. Improvements have included planting trees in the park, awarding “yard of the month” recognition gifts, main street banners, cash gifts to new businesses/owners for business promotion, Stratton web site setup, donations to Lions Club for fireworks, shrubbery around community signs, and much more. Contact Phil Miles, 308.276.2159.

### **Work Recruitment Efforts, McCook**

Due to tremendous recruitment efforts by McCook, the community was selected as the site for the State of Nebraska Work Ethic Camp. The Work Ethic Camp is a new step and a direction for Nebraska and the Department of Correctional Services. It will also provide for economic growth in the McCook area. The facility is expected to be completed in August, 2000. Contact Raleigh Haas, 308.345.8405.

**Ashton Community Club & Polish Heritage Center**

Ashton, a community of 250, is on the move. During 1999, the Ashton Community Club renovated the Legion Hall into a Community Center that will be enjoyed by many area citizens. Work on the Polish Heritage Center began last year. The mission of the Center is to educate both young and old about the Polish customs and traditions. The Center's biggest project was the annual Polish Soup Supper Buffet, which fed over 500 people in November. Contact Marge Ritz, 308.738.2177, or Phyllis Piechota, 308.738.2260.

**Boelus Civic Center**

The Boelus Civic Center, located on the main street of Boelus, was designed and built in part by local volunteers. The Civic Center has a large room with a stage for activities, a spacious kitchen, a smaller banquet/business room, offices, and storage space. This new community center replaces an older, smaller one and better serves the purpose of holding the town and rural area together. Contact Paul Janulewicz, 308.996.4442.

**BussStop, Minden**

In August of 1996, after the community of Minden lost their women's clothing and children stores, Sally Jo Buss combined her mother's antique shop, a women's dress shop, and a children's store into one. The BussStop, located on the west side of Minden's Town Square, provides personal service to customers and saves customers time by remembering their needs. Within the boutique atmosphere, the antiques are integrated within the store as props. Sally Buss's efforts and creativeness keeps business within the community of Minden. Contact Sally Jo Buss, 308.832.1880.

**Cornhusker Public Power District, Regional Cooperative Efforts**

Cornhusker Public Power District is a non-profit electric distribution system serving east central Nebraska's farming country. Cornhusker Power provides low-cost electricity to portions of Platte, Colfax, Boone, Nance, Greeley, and Wheeler counties. In 1999, Cornhusker Power and 13 other rural electric system throughout Nebraska formed a purchasing alliance in order to save money by paying less through large orders. Besides providing low-cost electricity, Cornhusker Power stays involved in east central Nebraska communities through economic development, a regional technology task force, safety programs for schools, and much more. Contact Cornhusker Public Power District, 402.564.2821 or 1.800.955.2773.

**Crane Meadows Nature Center, Wood River**

Crane Meadows Nature Center includes 250 acres of prime river habitat which gives visitors a close-up viewing of wetland wildlife. The Nature Center is a private, non-profit organization providing environmental education and recreational activities to people of all ages. Contact the Nature Center, 308.328.1820.

**Evelyn Sharp Days & Elyria Pumpkin Festival, Elyria**

The Evelyn Sharp Days event was started several years ago to help remember Evelyn Sharp, what she did for the community, and the supreme sacrifice she made for the country. Volunteers spend hundreds of hours working to make this project a success. This project draws many people to the community of Ord for the benefit of the community's businesses. Elyria Pumpkin Festival was started to let people know that Elyria, Nebraska was still on the map. Festival activities include an all-day craft show, a lunch at noon, and free pumpkin pie all day. All the workers volunteer their time and many donate food for the lunch. The Festival of 1999 was the 7<sup>th</sup> annual and had the best crowd ever. Over 800 people registered and had lunch. Contact Judi Welniak, 308.728.5727.

**GROW Nebraska, Holbrook**

GROW (Grassroots Resources & Opportunities for Winners) Nebraska is a marketing and training program for Nebraska artisans. The purpose of GROW Nebraska is to expand Nebraska's arts and craft industry and create a sustainable environment for arts and crafts entrepreneurs through education and training, product jurying, group marketing and advertising, and a skills matching database. Contact Janell Anderson, 1.888.GROWNEB.

**Heartland Water Quality Partnership**

The Heartland Water Quality Partnership project was developed by the Loup Basin RC&D along with other RC&D's across the state in August of 1999. The project provides direct assistance to rural areas to protect water quality and provide a greater degree of wellhead protection to public sources of drinking water. Project activities include contacting rural communities and utility operators, educating them and providing them with drinking water protection guidebooks, assembling and reviewing community data, contaminant source inventories, developing wellhead delineation maps, identifying wellhead protection area boundaries, and development and implementation of wellhead protection plans. Contact Vicki Bauer or Charlene Rienks at 308.728.3393.

**Loup Basin RC&D America Recycle Day Event, Ord**

Over 350 citizens and 250 elementary students collected and learned about Household Hazardous Waste and Recyclables at the 1999 Recycle Day Event hosted by the Loup Basin RC&D. The purpose of the event was to enhance awareness of the importance of recycling and how it affects water quality and to educate communities on how and where they can recycle. Contact Vicki Bauer or Charlene Rienks at 308.728.3393.

**Oxford Locker**

Carl and Karen Kramer of Minneapolis heard the news that Oxford Locker, a long-time Oxford business, was closing. Having family in the area and having meat and management experience, Carl and Karen Kramer bought the Oxford Locker. Many individuals and organizations assisted in putting together a financial plan in order to keep this business open. Oxford Locker, to date, has six full-time employees and one part-time employee. Contact David Hunt, 308.824.3511.

**Village of Guide Rock**

A drop of prevention goes a long way in the community of Guide Rock. Since 1998, the community has worked together to protect their groundwater sources through the closing of abandoned wells and the implementation of a Wellhead Protection Management Plan. Agricultural producers, business and individual property owners alike are key to the success of this project. Contact Jolene Duffy, 402.257.3945.

**Willa Cather Spring Conference, Red Cloud**

The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial promotes increased understanding and appreciation of the life, time, settings, and work of Willa Cather through their annual Willa Cather Spring Conference. The 1999 Conference included touring Cather's childhood home and museum, paper presentations, recognition of the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship finalists, and "The Passing Show", which was a discussion of Cather's 1919 Red Cross Magazine article: "*The Education You Have to Fight For.*" The guest speaker at the 1999 banquet was U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey. For more information visit [www.willacather.org](http://www.willacather.org).

**Butte Community Historical Center and Museum**

Finding a new use for an old building was part of the plan to convert the vacant Saints Peter and Paul Parochial School in Butte to a Community Historical Center and Museum. The Center was donated by the Catholic Diocese to the Village of Butte and is currently operated by the Butte Restoration Committee. The Center, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, houses an extensive geology display, as well as historic items, records, and memorabilia. Contact Jane Brewster, 402.775.2534.

**Cottonwood Villa Assisted Living Facility, Ainsworth**

The Cottonwood Villa Assisted Living Facility in Ainsworth represents a grassroots brainstorming idea that moved to a dream and ultimately a reality. A majority of the general population of Keya Paha, Rock, and Brown counties supported the idea of developing an assisted living facility. Local investors also felt this was a worthy effort and proceeded to fund a portion of the facility. An estimated 50 volunteers gave their time in a can do spirit to help bring the brainstorm to a reality. Contact Todd Mundhenke, 402.387.2883.

**Helping Build Great Communities – 2 – State Community Builders Module, Bassett**

The first Community Builders Module to cross state lines was formed in June of 1999. The four counties, Boyd and Holt in Nebraska and Gregory and Charles Mix in South Dakota, have identified several common strengths and a desire to work together. Meetings are held every other month, rotating between communities in Nebraska and South Dakota. Community tours and informational programs are included in each meeting. Contact Sheryl Hiatt, 402.684.3346.

**Highland House Assisted Living, Spencer**

Spencer’s elderly residents now have an option that allows them to continue living in Spencer and receive the medical care they need. This past year, the Highland House, a 20-bed assisted living facility was opened. The completed project provides an alternative living opportunity to residents and has created 10 jobs in the community. Contact Ray Hagberg, 402.589.1576.

**Nebraska Highway #12 Scenic Byway Committee, Bassett**

The Highway #12 Scenic Byway committee has worked diligently for Scenic Byway Designation for the entire 231-mile length of Highway #12. Support was received from all communities along the byway and several regional organizations. Work continues to develop a management plan for “Nebraska’s North Shore Drive”. Contact Sheryl Hiatt, 402.684.3346.

**North Central Nebraska FAM Tour, Ainsworth**

The North Central Nebraska Travel and Tourism Council, committed to building awareness of North Central Nebraska among state and federal agency staff, held its annual FAM tour in Blaine, Brown and Cherry counties. Tour sites included businesses, and other visitors attractions. Contact Joan Felton, 402.387.0107.

**North Central Nebraska RC&D, Bassett**

The North Central Nebraska RC&D supports several important rural development projects in northern Nebraska. The RC&D has served as convener for the West North Central Community Builders Module, was instrumental in the formation of the North Central Nebraska Travel and Tourism Council, and is a partner in the Outback Initiative. The RC&D formed and continues to participate with the Niobrara Valley Wood Products group in order to increase and promote Nebraska’s timber industry and value-added wood products. Visit their regional web site at [www.nebraskaoutback.com](http://www.nebraskaoutback.com) . Contact Gene Lehnert, 402.684.3346.

**Coleridge Community School & District Learning Center**

Coleridge Community School added two new classrooms in 1999 along with a District Learning Center. The District Learning Center is a computerized classroom where students from Coleridge and surrounding districts can take advantage of learning via satellite and computers. Citizens and community groups raised a total of \$283,000 for the project. Contact Coleridge Community School, 402.283.4844.

**Gilman Park Arboretum, Pierce**

Gilman Park Arboretum's mission is to improve the landscape environment of Pierce and surrounding areas. With over 200 different labeled varieties of trees and shrubs among the 506 woody plants, the arboretum serves as an outdoor education area. In 1999, the entrance area was landscaped and 1,000 feet of the wood chip path was paved. Paving the path created a wheelchair accessible path for residents of the Pierce Manor. The path leads to the historic bridge and passes through the new butterfly garden. Contact Gary Zimmer, 402.329.4873.

**Nebraska Development Youth Network**

The Nebraska Development Youth Network began in Northeast Nebraska and is now expanding to eight regions across the state. The goal of the Youth Network is to reverse the trend of outmigration of today's youth from rural communities. The Youth Network is facilitated by the Nebraska Development Network, and together they work to build a formal system of communication and collaboration between secondary and post-secondary schools, community and economic development groups and civic organizations. The Youth Network provides opportunities for youth to get involved in entrepreneurship, economic, community, and cultural activities. Contact Michelle Sterling-Evans, 402.375.7048.

**Nebraska Public Power District, Economic Development Office**

NPPD promotes sustained economic development in the communities and rural areas they serve. From recruiting new industries through advertising, direct mail, trade shows, recruiting visits and the Internet to positioning communities for economic success by printing fact books, community brochures and community web site development. NPPD has proven its commitment to rural Nebraska. Contact, Dennis Hall, 402.563.5534.

**Northeast Early Childhood Training Partnership, Pender**

Combining equality initiatives in Early Childhood Professional Development, the "Starting Out Right" satellite conference was a premier effort which benefitted hundreds of professional and families across disciplines. A total of 918 participated in the satellite conference, representing parents, grandparents, health care and family service professionals, policy makers, and others who work with young children and families. Contact Susan Strahm, 402.385.2342

**Northeast Nebraska Business Retention and Expansion Program, Norfolk**

The Northeast Business Retention and Expansion program surveyed 86 manufacturers in the 11-county region of Northeast Nebraska. The purpose of the survey was to identify manufacturing needs. Specific areas that were identified were training new employees, dealing with government regulations, market research, and developing marketing plans. Additionally, 40 percent of the surveyed manufacturers indicated plans for plant expansion within the next two years. Contact Renay Robison-Scheer, 402.379.1150.

**1999 Youth Leadership Conference, Norfolk**

"Tomorrow's Leaders Today" was the theme for the 1999 Youth Leadership Conference Students held in Norfolk. One hundred seventy teens participated in the Conference by planning, conducting and attending workshops on team building, dealing with conflict, service learning, communication, character counts, developing a project, and peer pressure. Present and past senators also spoke to participants on current issues that impact Nebraska's youth and families. Contact Sandy Hatter, 402.584.2234

**Roving Computer Lab**

The Roving Computer Lab does just that. With the help of technology trainers, the computer lab roves around Northeast Nebraska helping individuals learn computers and basic software packages. The computer lab was funded through a technology grant from the Department of Economic Development. More than 560 citizens in seven counties received more than 1,500 hours of computer instruction. Contact Sandy Hatter, 402.584.2234.

**Tarbox Hollow Living Prairie, Dixon**

Tarbox Hollow Living Prairie is a small farm which developed into a tourism business. Tarbox Hollow, a buffalo ranch in Northeast Nebraska, provides buffalo education tours to visitors in a covered wagon. Tarbox Hollow also works to diversify plants within the pasture, which includes harvesting some species by hand. Tarbox Hollow represents Northeast Nebraska through Outdoor Expos and works with surrounding communities to attract tourists to the area. Tourists from 22 foreign countries and nearly every state have visited the buffalo ranch. Contact Earl and Rose Mason, 402.584.2337.

**White House, Pierce**

What was once a Unity Hall for the St. Joseph Catholic Church is now the White House in Pierce Nebraska. The remodeled White House is the meeting place for community members' weddings and receptions. It has had a tremendous impact on the economic growth of Pierce by providing meeting space and an event location. Contact Mike Wichman, 402.329.6710.

**Youth Leadership Council, South Sioux City**

Dakota County youth have a voice in the South Sioux City Youth Leadership Council. The Council's mission is to involve youth in community issues such as safety, community service and enhancements. The involved students also serve as a liaison to the South Sioux City Council. The Youth Leadership project provides youth with an opportunity to affect positive change in their community. Contact Dianne Lutt, 402.494.0601.



**Ag Magnet School, Mead**

A new opportunity for youth interested in agricultural education is located in Mead—a new Agricultural Magnet School. The school provided its first course in 1999 and will continue to expand over the next couple of years. The Ag Magnet School will provide an enhanced curriculum in areas related to agriculture, food science and the environment. The program will also include a strong school-business connection through internships, scholarships, and work opportunities. Contact Dan Duncan, 402.624.8000 or Angela Liefeld, 402.624.3435.

**Auburn Recreational Complex**

In June of 1999, the City of Auburn began construction of the Auburn Recreational Complex. The Complex is a state-of-the-art, beautifully landscaped, multi-purpose recreational facility that will satisfy a myriad of outdoor interests. The 31-acre complex will contain a 1-mile nature trail, baseball/softball fields, a picnic shelter, and many more amenities. Contact Sherry Heskett, 402.274.3420.

**Blue Valley Community Action, Fairbury**

Blue Valley Community Action is taking a proactive approach to help area residents with their homeownership needs. Through grants from the USDA Rural Development and Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, the BVCA has assisted more than 30 families with the purchase of their own homes, totalling over two million dollars. Contact Faith Medina, 402.729.2278.

**Coordinated Comprehensive Planning in Southeast Nebraska**

In a partnership with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and five countywide groups of jurisdictions in Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Richardson and Gage counties, the Southeast Nebraska Development District coordinated Interlocal Agreements for the application and awarding of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The grant was funded for the development and implementation of Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances, and Subdivision Regulations for each participating county and community. CDBG funds of \$375,000 are being matched by \$85,000 in local funds for a total project cost of \$460,000. Contact David R. Taladay, 402.475.2560.

**Eastern Systems Library System, Omaha**

**The Eastern Systems Library System** serves many of the state's small libraries, both public and school, with advice, scholarships, grants, and support. The vision of the Eastern Systems Library System is to "encourage the development of leadership, foster independence, and promote public awareness to improve the quality of life". Eastern's support keeps the opportunity for a lifetime of learning available to all citizens. Contact Kathy Tooker, [ktooker@neon.nlc.state.ne.us](mailto:ktooker@neon.nlc.state.ne.us).

**Fall Festival of Colors, Mead**

The Festival of Colors is an annual, environmental celebration, full of color, fun and education. The 1999 Festival addressed the public's growing interest in environmentally friendly, low-maintenance ways to design, plant and maintain landscapes. About 10,000 people came to Mead for this one-day event. Activities included guided tours, demonstrations, a Family Fun Center and much more. Contact Anne Streich, 402.472.2854

**Lincoln Journal Star Newspaper – Hometown Edition, Lincoln**

Highlighting the uniqueness, hidden jewels and personalities of Nebraska's Southeast communities and neighborhoods is what makes the Hometown Edition of the Lincoln Journal Star a weekly Sunday favorite for many of the newspaper's readers. In-depth stories celebrate the traditions, heritage and events of Southeast Nebraska. Contact Peter Salter, 402.473.7306.

**Nebraska's Bridal Outlet, Wahoo**

Nebraska's Bridal Outlet began when a few discount bridal gowns in Bob Sloup's Wahoo Surplus Warehouse turned into a bridal business of its own. Now people from all over Nebraska and other states know about Bob and the discounted bridal dresses. Bob's success is a result of his willingness to accept challenges and opportunities. For more information visit [www.co.saunders.ne.us/nebraskabridal.htm](http://www.co.saunders.ne.us/nebraskabridal.htm).

**Nemaha County Development Alliance, Auburn**

During 1999, the Nemaha County Development Alliance made great strides in economic and community development for its citizens. Six volunteer task forces—housing, industrial recruitment, business and industry services, finance, transportation and infrastructure, and marketing—were formed. The task forces are working on and have accomplished many projects including new employment opportunities, construction of a 16-unit affordable housing project in Auburn, and sponsoring the Nebraska EDGE Program for Nemaha County citizens. Contact Jed Wagner, 402.274.3985.

**Omaha Public Power District, Economic Development Office, Omaha**

The Omaha Public Power District serves a 13 county area in Southeastern Nebraska (population 643,000). Over the past two years, the OPPD staff worked with projects that will create more than 3,800 jobs and involve capital investment of approximately \$411 million. Some of the projects included the success of Caterpillar Claas America and the new 970-bed Tecumseh Correctional Facility. Contact Roger Christianson, 402.636.3730.

**Peru Strategic Planning Efforts**

The Peru Chamber of Commerce, along with leaders throughout the city, underwent a strategic planning process with the Nebraska Development Network – Southeast Region. The process included a community survey, town hall meetings, and the formation of various local committees. Volunteers from Peru continue to work to reach the goals set during this process. Contact Becky Propst, 402.872.3335.

**Pioneer Chapel/Cesky Bratri Cemetery, Milligan**

A small Chapel built in 1874 served as the first Catholic Church for pioneers in Fillmore and Saline Counties. In 1890, a larger Church replaced the small Chapel and was moved to the Cesky Bratri/North Cemetery in 1901. Eventually the Church was no longer used and the doors were closed. In 1995, after 125 years of deterioration, a fundraising effort was established to preserve the historical edifice. Volunteers began the restoration in 1996, and on July 26, 1998 the doors were reopened for graveside services, prayer, visits, or tour groups. The Church serves as a memorial to the pioneer men and women who endured the hardships of breaking new ground in Nebraska. Contact Melvin R. Vavra, 402.629.4595.

**Telemarketing Recruitment Efforts, Peru**

In response to the closing of a telemarketing firm on the Peru State College campus, a partnership effort developed among the Nebraska Community Development Alliance, Peru State College, Omaha Public Power District, and the Department of Economic Development. The team organized a marketing campaign to relocate a company into the available building. Several businesses responded to the campaign, and in December of 1999, JRW Sales announced their decision to come to PSC. JRW Sales intends to hire 60 employees. Contact Jed Wagner, 402.274.3985.

**Small Communities, Big Opportunities, Steinauer & Bruning**

Nearly 100 people representing over 30 Southeast Nebraska communities attended the third round of Small Communities - Big Opportunities workshops in Steinauer and Bruning in 1999. The workshops featured elected officials, volunteer leaders and representatives from state agencies who helped community members map the future direction for their communities. Contact Howard McNiff, 402.335.3345

### **Center for Rural Affairs**

The Center for Rural Affairs works to build communities that stand for social justice, economic opportunity, and environmental stewardship. The Center engages in research, education, advocacy, and service work to further this vision of rural America. The Center for Rural Affairs receives its support through grants and contracts, donations, honoraria, fees for services, and publication income. Contact Center for Rural Affairs, 402.846.5428.

### **ConNEcting Nebraska**

ConNEcting Nebraska is the new umbrella organization for the Electronic Main Street and Master Navigator Programs. Through ConNEcting Nebraska, individuals learn how to use the Internet, send email and build Web pages. Electronic Main Street Program shows small business owners and managers how to use the tools of electronic commerce to help them improve the efficiency of their business operations and compete more effectively in global markets. Contact the ConNEcting Nebraska Management Team, 402.472.1772.

### **Development Forum Video Conferences**

In 1999, five Development Forum Video Conferences were sponsored by the partnership of the Community Development Society, American Society of Public Administration, and the Nebraska Development Network, Inc. The Forums enhanced networking, increased knowledge of changes affecting rural communities, identified common regional and local development alternatives, and clarified policy implications and program recommendations. Contact Richard A. Noyes, 402.475.2795.

### **Entrepreneurs of the Future Camp**

The Rural Enterprise Assistance Project, Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, Students In Free Enterprise, and the School at the Center Project hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Entrepreneurs of the Future Camp in June of 1999. High school students from across Nebraska attended the 5-day camp. The camp gives entrepreneur-minded students a place to develop ideas and learn about the basic fundamentals of being an entrepreneur. The camp also helps students focus on community and develop leadership skills. Contact Jeff Reynolds, 402.656.3091.

### **Heartland Center for Leadership, Rural: Urban Connection**

In 1999, the Heartland Center for Leadership Development worked with 50 rural and urban community developers from 12 states through its program, "Strengthening the Rural-Urban Connection." The program provided a community forum for individuals who share many of the same issues and challenges, but have few opportunities to share solutions. As a result of the program, regional rural-urban collaborative networks were developed in Nebraska and the Midwest. Contact Regina Carlson, 402.474.7667.

### **Nebraska Arts Council**

Nebraska's Community Art Councils support and promote the arts in their cities and towns. The Nebraska Arts Council provides grants to sustain the arts for the people of Nebraska. The Community Councils work very hard to make sure that their community has an opportunity to view and participate in all the arts. Contact the Nebraska Arts Council, 402.595.2122.

### **Nebraska Community Foundation**

The Nebraska Community Foundation, headquartered in Lincoln, is a non-profit, charitable organization providing financial management, strategic development and education/training services to communities, organizations and donors throughout Nebraska since 1993. In the last two fiscal years, the Foundation has distributed an average of \$3.5 million to community betterment projects of its affiliated funds and now has nearly \$5.0 million in permanent assets under management. Contact Community Foundation, 402.471.6009.

### **Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP)**

Since 1963, the Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) has helped communities meet challenges while building on the vitality of their strengths and resources. NCIP recognizes the leadership, community and economic development efforts for Nebraska's communities and counties. These communities organize to plan their future, set goals, determine priorities and implement project action plans. Contact Pamela Mulder-Forster, 402.471.6280.

### **Nebraska Development Network**

The Nebraska Development Network works to connect business and community leaders with people in organizations, agencies and the private sector who have stepped forward as partners in community and economic growth. Members include businesses, educational institutions, elected officials, governmental agencies, chambers of commerce, statewide associations, commissions, tribal governments and utilities. Contact Jo Lowe, 402.471.2698.

**Nebraska Diplomats**

The Nebraska Diplomats Inc. is a non-profit corporation. With membership of more than 475 business executives and community leaders, the Nebraska Diplomats is the largest economic development organization in Nebraska. Nebraska Diplomats promote investment and employment in Nebraska to world business leaders. Diplomats are responsible for contacting business leaders who could be potential investors in the Nebraska economy. Contact Susan Stibal, 402.471.4592 or 1.800.426.6505.

**Nebraska Early Childhood Care and Education “Regional Training Projects”**

Fourteen Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Training Projects exist throughout Nebraska. These training projects support professional development activities of nearly 14,000 childhood caregivers and teachers in homes, centers, and school-based programs. Regional Projects help build partnerships for coordination of existing training and development of activities that unify and strengthen programs and services for young children and families. Contact Susan Strahm, 402.385.2342.

**Nebraska EDGE Program**

The Nebraska EDGE (Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs) is the umbrella organization for rural entrepreneurial training programs that are hosted by local communities, organizations and associations. Since 1993, the Nebraska EDGE has assisted more than 1,000 entrepreneurs, small business owners and their partners start, improve and expand their businesses. Contact Marilyn Schlake, 402.472.4138.

**Nebraska Enterprise Opportunity Network**

Nebraska Enterprise Opportunity Network is a member-based association of non-profit organizations and public agencies that provide training, technical services, and micro lending assistance to Nebraska’s micro businesses. NEON has been instrumental in enacting legislation such as the Nebraska Microenterprise Development Act. Contact NEON, 402.475.1399.

**Nebraska IMPACT Project**

Since 1994, the IMPACT Project has helped Nebraska’s citizens work for a better quality of life in rural communities. The IMPACT Project is a joint effort between the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, and the Center for Rural Affairs. The Project helps farmers, ranchers, and other community members form small groups and identify projects that address local needs. Contact Paul Rohrbaugh, 402.471.0817.

**Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, Super Targeted Mortgage Program**

The Super-Targeted Mortgage Program provides financial incentives to communities increasing the supply of affordable housing through new single-family construction and substantial rehabilitation of the existing housing stock. The Program, focused toward low and moderate income households, is designed to improve the development of viable neighborhoods in rural communities. Contact NIFA, 402.434.3900.

**Nebraska LEAD Program**

The Nebraska LEAD Program is a state-wide agricultural leadership education program. Its mission is to prepare and motivate men and women in agriculture for more effective leadership. LEAD provides a forum for participants to learn more about government and economic and societal issues that affect rural communities through in-state, national and international study/travel seminars. Contact Allen Blezek, 402.472.6810.

**Nebraska LIED Main Street**

The Main Street Program works with Nebraska communities with a population of 50,000 or less to provide the opportunity for revitalization of their main street districts through economic development and historic preservation. A maximum of four communities are selected each year based on competitive application and preservation process. Contact J.L. Schmidt, 402.471.1016.

**Nebraska Mandates Management Initiative**

In 1994, the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality initiated the Nebraska Mandates Management Initiative (NMMI), a community-based team process which assists local governments in assessing and solving local environmental health challenges. Focusing on voluntary compliance and regulatory flexibility, the NMMI works through several avenues to reach out to Nebraskans. Contact M.J. Rose, 402.471.3193.

#### Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund

The Microenterprise Partnership Fund is a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation that serves as both a financial intermediary for supporting microenterprise activities and as a broker for arranging such services. The Partnership Fund works actively with other private, federal, and state-level funding sources to provide lending capital and program development support to those programs that directly serve micro businesses. Contact Gene Severens, 402.863.2577

#### Nebraska Professional Golfers Association, Community College Scholarships

Nebraska Section of the PGA coordinates the Budweiser Nebraska Open Golf Tournament every fall. Proceeds from the tournament are given to the Community College Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships to students at five rural community college systems. Since 1992, more than \$300,000 in scholarships have been provided to students to assist them in completing their degrees. Contact Nebraska Public Power District.

#### Nebraska Rural Electric Association

The members of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association continue to be strong leaders in providing efficient cost-effective power to Nebraska's rural communities. The NREA has also proven to be a strong and effective community partner and supporter. Contact, Rex Carpenter, 402.475.4899

#### Nebraska Rural Poll

The Nebraska Rural Poll, coordinated by the Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development, is an annual effort providing insight about trends and changes occurring in rural Nebraska. More than 7,000 rural residents are randomly selected to participate in this poll. The Partnership for Rural Nebraska, the UNL Cooperative Extension Division, and the UNL Agricultural Research Division have assisted in funding this project. Contact Rebecca Filkens, 402.472.7882.

#### Nebraska's Community Colleges: Project Evaluation

Project Evaluation is a statewide project involving employers and Nebraska's community colleges working together to provide training in the areas of industrial maintenance, safety, instrumentation, quality, and human relations. Employees take training in basic skills and theoretical concepts by using interactive CDs and complete hands-on technical training at community college campuses. Contact Doug Pauley, 1.800.642.1083.

#### 1999 Nebraska Rural Institute

The Partnership for Rural Nebraska's Nebraska Rural Institute provides training and networking opportunities for individuals interested in rural and community development in Nebraska. The 4<sup>th</sup> annual conference was held in Norfolk. The conference included one-day learning tracks focusing on youth networking and agriculture and mobile workshops on tourism, diversity, building local communities, and business development. Contact Charlotte Narjes, 402.472.1724.

#### Nonprofit Organization Leadership Development Certification

Chadron State College provided a Certification in Non-profit Organization Leadership Development Program in 1999. This program is designed for management personnel of non-profit organizations and anyone aspiring to acquire a leadership position in a non-profit agency. Contact Emily Klein, 308.432.6380.

#### Partnership for Rural Nebraska

The Partnership for Rural Nebraska is a cooperative commitment by the State of Nebraska, University of Nebraska, the Federal Government, and other stakeholders, to address rural opportunities and challenges identified by rural Nebraskans. The Partnership works to improve the effectiveness of resources that support local-based rural development efforts statewide, and to better utilize human and financial resources for rural development. Contact Deb Cottier, 308.432.4881.

#### Rural Enterprise Assistance Project – Individual Loan Program

The Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP), a project of the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, is a business development strategy that builds and supports small, self-employed businesses in rural areas of Nebraska and the Midwest. Introduced in early 1999, the REAP Individual-Rural Business Enterprise-Revolving Loan Fund is designed to fill the gap that exists between REAP's peer/step-up lending program and access to larger loan capital. Contact Kendall Scheer, 402.846.5428.

#### Rural News Bits

The Rural News Bits is a monthly newsletter published by the Partnership for Rural Nebraska. The newsletter provides timely and informative information to persons involved in Nebraska's rural development efforts. Contact Marilyn Schlake, 402.472.4138.

# Special Recognition

## National Rural Development Partnership

The Partnership is creating a significant national rural constituency capable of addressing the rural development needs of America. The Partnership is important and has matured greatly since its inception. Nebraska has benefited greatly from the National Partnership since affiliating in early 1992.

## Department of Economic Development Field Staff

The Commission recognizes the tremendous efforts of the Department of Economic Development Field Staff and their dedication to rural development. In the Northeast Area, Connie Justis; South-east Area, Carla Patterson; Central Area, Linda Fettig and Western Area, Suzanne Browne.

## Duly Noted...

Many local and statewide rural development initiatives recognized in the past continue to contribute to the development of rural Nebraska. While many of these initiatives are not specifically recognized in this year's Nebraska's Outstanding 100 Rural Development Initiatives, they are appreciated for their continued good work!

*College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis  
Nebraska Department of Agriculture  
Nebraska Department of Economic Development  
Nebraska's Information Technology Efforts  
Nebraska Library Commission  
Nebraska National Trails Museum  
Nebraska Online  
Rural Policy Research Institute  
Tri-State Development Initiative*