



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

YOUR RURAL NEWS FOR OVER 40 YEARS | LYONS, NEBRASKA | POPULATION 851 | NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2017

SMALL TOWNS: UNIQUE AND EXCITING

BY KATHIE STARKWEATHER, KATHIES@CFRA.ORG

Small towns can be places of art and culture showcased in unique and exciting ways. Folks assume that only cities have such opportunities, but our project shows that assumption is not correct.

We looked at community-supported art as one way to bring attention to arts and culture in the small towns of Decatur, Lyons, and Oakland. These towns then worked together to organize and lead the Byway of Art Tour held Sept. 30, showcasing these cultural gems in a thoroughly enjoyable way.

The Byway of Art began in 2014 with an “outdoor living room” experience where couches, coffee tables, lamps, and snacks were placed on each town’s main

—SEE BYWAY OF ART ON PAGE 3



Residents of Oakland are proving small towns really do have it all. This summer, they unveiled Lycka Till, a mobile stage with a backdrop of a Swedish fishing town. Brian Depew, Center Executive Director, and Deb Anderson, Community Lead, officially dedicate the project during the Byway of Art Tour in September. | Photo by Rhea Landholm

FAMILY FARMERS AND RANCHERS LET DOWN

BY RHEA LANDHOLM, RHEAL@CFRA.ORG

Family farmers and ranchers have waited years for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to institute basic fairness protections in the poultry and livestock

industries.

However, last month, officials announced a rollback of two rules of the Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA); decided not to move

forward with an interim final rule of the Farmer Fair Practices; and said they will take no further action on a proposed regulation of the Farmer Fair Practices Rule.

—SEE FAMILY FARMS AND RANCHES ON PAGE 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 Note from the editor

4 Rural communities tapped by craft breweries

4 Loop Brewing spurs economic development in McCook

5 Rock focuses on water and clean energy in Iowa

6 27 Iowa farmers sign farm bill letter

7 Jobs sweep into region with wind development

8 Food security takes root in Native communities

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

BY RHEA LANDHOLM, RHEAL@CFRA.ORG

This edition of our newsletter focuses on PROGRESS that strengthens rural communities, small businesses, and family farms and ranches.

Our Byway of Art project demonstrates the history, arts, and culture of three rural towns. Residents of Decatur, Oakland, and Lyons embraced community-driven art and now have projects for future generations to enjoy.

We learn about the craft brewing and wind energy industries that are providing jobs, resulting in tax income, and boosting rural economies.

In our executive director's essay, Brian talks about the com-



munity food work we have done alongside two Native American tribes, and the progress that has been made in helping them establish nearly 300 gardens this year. These residents are realizing they

can be in control of their food systems.

We hear from 27 farmers who live in Iowa. They are taking a step forward and writing their lawmakers about the future of our soil and water. They understand progress has been made in the last farm bill and ask Congress to protect conservation programs.

Lastly, we hear about the government's lack of progress to institute basic fairness protections in the poultry and livestock industries. Last month, rules that would protect family farmers and ranchers were rolled back and shut down. We urge lawmakers to reconsider. Progress can be made in rural communities.

FAMILY FARMS AND RANCHES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Poultry and livestock production is an important source of jobs and income for many in rural communities. A healthy and stable community depends not on the number of livestock produced, but on the number of livestock producers living and working there.

The rolled back rules would have made the marketplace more friendly to family farmers and ranchers, allowing for more small businesses in our communities.

The Center for Rural Affairs works hard for genuine opportunity for family farms and ranches, beginning with our organization's inception in 1973.

In 1997, we had a seat in Washington when our executive director was nominated to the National

Commission on Small Farms. Together, members produced a report, "A Time to Act," calling for livestock market reforms.

Two years later, we asked the agriculture secretary to utilize his authority and write a rule providing a definition for what constitutes an "undue or unreasonable preference" as prohibited by the Packers and Stockyards Act. He declined to act.

During both the 2002 and 2008 farm bill debates, the Center called for the inclusion of a livestock market competition title. In 2008, those efforts were rewarded with a provision. As a result, USDA published a proposed rule in 2010 after hearing concerns raised by family farmers and ranchers

across the country regarding fair livestock and poultry markets. Last October, the rule was submitted to the White House.

Last month, this rule was shut down, alongside two GIPSA rules.

Farmers, ranchers, and consumers would have benefited from the competitive, transparent markets these rules would help protect.

Our fight for fairness has not ended; the fight is long, but we will not give up. We believe progress can be achieved despite this setback.

Join us by calling your lawmakers today and urge them to reconsider. Let us know you made the call by emailing annaj@cfra.org.

PAPER & E-NEWS

This newsletter is available both electronically and in print. To receive it online, sign up at the Center's website, cfra.org, or email us at info@cfra.org.

Editing and layout by Rhea Landholm

Printed at West Point News,
West Point, Nebraska

The Center for Rural Affairs is
an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Address corrections:

You may correct your mailing address by faxing the back page to 402.687.2200, or call the Center for Rural Affairs at 402.687.2100.





A postcard from the 1800s showed a trolley traveling down Decatur's main thoroughfare. Through conversation with the residents, we learned the trolley was a myth; the photo was faked. As their community's project, a trolley was installed in a greenspace on their main street. The venue is used to tell stories, display local art, and more. Here, local author, Mary Conneally, presents to visitors. | Photo by Rhea Landholm

BYWAY OF ART, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

street. Folks stopped by for a cup of coffee and sat to talk about their town: what they love, the history, and what their community meant to them.

Ideas for public art pieces were developed from those first community conversations, and shared with folks in each town. Decisions were made and projects got underway.

RURAL LEGENDS TROLLEY

Decatur residents wanted to create a storytelling trolley. In the mid- to late 1800s, pictures showed the town had sophisticated transportation with a postcard of a trolley traveling down Broadway (their main street).

During their outdoor living room conversation, we learned the trolley was actually a myth to attract new people to town.

The picture of the trolley had been superimposed; no actual trolley ever existed. But, one exists now and continues the legend of the trolley. The venue is used as a place to read, tell stories, display local art, and more.

LYCKA TILL

Oakland is rich in Swedish history and wanted to honor that.

Lycka Till, a mobile stage with a backdrop of a Swedish fishing town was designed, built, and dedicated. (Lycka Till is Swedish for "Break a Leg" and the perfect name for a stage for performers.) Opening night drew more than 100 people who were delighted to watch a live, Swedish-style vaudeville show with jokes, music, singing, and even a little bit of dancing.

The stage is available to the community, and has already been reserved for several events this summer. It will be used for many years to come, showcasing the arts.

STOREFRONT THEATER

Lyons chose to honor a movie theater that was built years ago, and has now been renovated into a venue with unique features.

An old storefront was turned into bleachers. The faux storefront folds out to accommodate the bleachers that roll out onto the sidewalk, and a mobile mov-

ie screen is brought onto Main Street. Movies have been held there all spring and summer, complete with free popcorn. The theater has drawn folks from other towns and beyond.

BYWAY OF ART TOUR

People were excited to take part in the Byway of Art Tour, and we consider the event to be a success.

We heard stories from participants who had never been to Decatur, for example, and had no idea the village had an art gallery. One was already planning another visit.

People visiting Lyons were wowed by Cosmic Film Studios and the art show at the Andromeda Gallery.

The stop in Oakland featured dinner and a bake sale. Folks filled the street as they enjoyed the Swedish vaudeville show on Lycka Till.

We saw community pride grow, faces of people reflecting their enjoyment of each piece of art, and interest to go back to those towns. That's community development at its finest.

RURAL COMMUNITIES TAPPED BY CRAFT BREWERIES

BY JOHNATHAN HLADIK, JOHNATHANH@CFRA.ORG

Brewing beer is big business in the U.S. In 2016, this centuries-old practice generated \$64 million in annual tax revenue and accounted for nearly 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product. Today, the beer industry employs more than 64,000 individuals nationwide.

These numbers are on the rise, especially when it comes to craft brewers. According to the Brewers Association, a craft brewer is small, independent, and traditional. Breweries that meet this definition have increased in number from 1,596, in 2009, to 5,234, in 2016.

Nowhere is this trend more evident than in rural communities. Take the central Nebraska communities of Hastings and Broken Bow. These rural locales sit 100 miles apart, but share one big commonality: they are both home to up-and-coming breweries.

Kinkaider Brewing Company, based in Broken Bow, was named for the Kinkaid Act of 1904 that permitted settlers to acquire northwest Nebraska land free of charge. The business was started in 2014 by four Nebraskans native to the Sandhills region.

Steeple Brewing Company, in Hastings, opened its doors early



Patrons check out Steeple Brewing Company in Hastings, Nebraska, on its opening day. The space is called their "Fellowship Hall." | Photo submitted

this year. Guests will find pews in the taproom and beers that reference life in a small town congregation. The head brewer is a chaplain.

We caught up with Nate Bell (NB), of Kinkaider, and Thomas Kluver (TK), of Steeple, to learn what it takes to succeed as entrepreneurs in this competitive industry.

Q: How have you been received by the local community?

TK: The local community has

been awesome. We were concerned about local buy-in during the planning stages, but the Hastings community has embraced us with open arms.

NB: Couldn't be better. We have a very progressive-minded community full of entrepreneurs. They love that they can say they have a brewery, and that they can call it their brewery. They love seeing it on tap in Omaha and Lincoln when they go out to eat. They love that their friends and family from

—SEE CRAFT BREWERIES ON PAGE 5

LOOP BREWING SPURS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MCCOOK

BY RHEA LANDHOLM, RHEAL@CFRA.ORG

Loop Brewing Company in McCook, Nebraska, is another craft brewery that has spurred economic development in its city.

The company was established in 2011 with 10 employees and now has 30 employees. To help get the business started, Center for Rural Affairs Rural Enter-

prise Assistance Project specialist Dena Beck provided one-on-one business plan coaching, and our small business lending program was able to help with a financing package to make the business a reality.

Loop Brewing Company is owned and operated by Tyler Ray

Loop, Tyler Sue Loop, and Adam Siegfried, who received our Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2015.

The brewpub serves up specialty craft beer, and brick oven pizza in a historical railroad icehouse, nestled next to the railroad tracks that shaped McCook nearly 130 years ago.

CRAFT BREWERIES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

around the state tell them they saw the beer. A lot of community pride.

Q: Have you encountered any barriers?

TK: It took a fair amount of time to understand what we needed to do on a federal, state, and local level to open a brewery. It would be nice if there was a manual out there that listed all of the steps, but the brewing community was really helpful. I can say opening a brewery and restaurant as two separate businesses in the same space complicated things for us.

NB: Two things would really grow the industry in Nebraska. The first is a reduction in the excise tax, as we are among the highest nationally. The second is streamline regulations to make it easier for us to do our job safely and responsibly for the taxpayer and the consumer. It is a complex industry with continuing complexity added all the time.

Q: What advice would you give to someone wanting to start a scaleable business in a rural community?

TK: There's a lot of advice out

there, but I think persistence is really important. If you have an idea and a plan to turn that idea into reality; that's great, but you won't get anywhere if you don't execute the plan. It's easy to put things off or get frustrated. For me, it's been great to have business partners, because we keep each other going.

NB: We draw people from a very large radius because we offer a unique product, handcrafted beer along with quality food. That is what rural businesses have to offer. If you develop a unique business and then knock it out of the park with service, you will draw people from all over. Our parking lot on Saturday is filled with out-of-county folks coming just to visit us.

Steeple and Kinkaidier succeed because of a sound business model. They thrive because of their strong connection to the community. It's a symbiotic relationship that drives economic activity across the region.

For those of us who enjoy a cold beverage after a long day, it's truly a win-win-win.



Customers visit Kinkaidier Brewing Company in Broken Bow, Nebraska. Small craft breweries are becoming a trend in rural communities and creating tax revenue. | Photo submitted

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

ROCK FOCUSES ON WATER AND CLEAN ENERGY IN IOWA

BY KATIE ROCK, KATIER@CFRA.ORG

Katie Rock recently joined the Center for Rural Affairs, where her focus will be on water and clean energy issues in Iowa. She is based in our Nevada, Iowa, office.

She serves as commissioner with Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District and on the executive committee of the North Raccoon River Watershed Management Coalition.

Rock brings a broad background



Katie Rock

in agricultural research to the Center, covering biomass crops, biotechnology, and information

technology. She has also done advocacy for young farmers, students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and through Make It Work, an advocacy group focused on working family issues.

Raised on a farm in eastern Iowa, Rock has a bachelors degree in plant health from Iowa State University and a masters of science in applied plant science degree from the University of Minnesota.

27 IOWA FARMERS SIGN FARM BILL LETTER

Twenty-seven Iowa farmers, in support of conservation and crop insurance practices in the 2018 farm bill, signed and sent a letter to Iowa Congressional Representatives in October. Would you like to get involved in advocating for change in the farm bill? Reach out to Anna today at 515.215.1294, or annaj@cfra.org.

Oct. 9, 2017

Dear Sens. Chuck Grassley and Joni Ernst, and Reps. Steve King, Dave Loebsack, David Young, and Rod Blum,

As farmers in Iowa, we write to you with concerns about the future of conservation in our state. Conservation practices, such as planting cover crops, have been enormously beneficial for our operations. We write to share ideas with you about how to further encourage farmers to practice conservation practices in Iowa, and ask that you please take these suggestions into consideration during your deliberations about the farm bill.

First, we have seen conservation practices can actually work to reduce on-farm risk. Measures such as planting cover crops, engaging in no-till, and planting a diverse crop rotation can help build soil health, which, in turn, can both encourage resilience to drought and reduce soil erosion and nutrient runoff. But, although these practices can help manage on-farm risk, and could potentially reduce our crop insurance costs and claims in the long run, crop insurance policies provide disincentives to practice conservation.

We believe crop insurance should work hand in hand with conservation policy. Specifically, we believe that farmers who develop strong conservation plans and implement improvements should be eligible for higher levels of premium subsidy than those who do not. This also would benefit taxpayers by offering them assurance that the dollars spent on crop insurance premium subsidies are investments in making our land more resilient and productive for future generations. We ask that, in the upcoming farm bill, you create an incentive under the crop insurance program to offer farmers higher premium subsidies for practicing conservation.

Another change in the next farm bill that would encourage conservation is to remove barriers within crop insurance policies to planting cover crops. Currently, in order to continue to qualify for crop insurance while still planting cover crops, farmers must follow special rules and terminate their cover crops on a particular timeline. These extra regulations serve as a disincentive to plant cover crops. We ask that the upcoming farm bill require crop insurance companies to treat all conservation practices recognized by the Natural Resource Conservation Service as “good farming practices” under crop insurance regulations.

Finally, we ask that you protect existing conservation programs under the Natural Resource Conservation Service, particularly working lands conservation programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. These programs provide important support for farmers who are interested in incorporating conservation practices into their operations but need extra support in order to afford it.

As Iowa farmers, we believe these ideas are good for farmers, good for Iowa, good for our rural economies, and good for our soil and water. Please provide strong support for conservation in the upcoming farm bill work. Thank you for your consideration.

Signed,

Nathan Anderson, Cherokee County
Kent Bennis, Clinton County
Charles Bieber, Allamakee County
Tim Blair, Van Buren County
Jerry Depew, Pocahontas County
Troy Deutmeyer, Delaware County
Kipp Fehr, Palo Alto County
Gary Fisher, Humboldt County
Bo Fox, Monona County

William Furlong, Johnson County
Larry Haren, Hamilton County
Brian Heide, Calhoun County
Keith Kuper, Hardin County
Levi Lyle, Washington County
Dennis Nebendahl, Allamakee County
Mark Peterson, Montgomery County
Clark Porter, Black Hawk County
Jeff Pudenz, Sac and Greene counties

Daniel Rosmann, Shelby County
Loran Seiser, Hamilton County
Zack Smith, Winnebago County
Jerry Sobotka, Pocahontas County
Kim Steele-Blair, Van Buren County
Max Trimpe, Johnson County
David L. Williams, Page County
Ray Wilson, Cass County
Bill and Dotty Zales, Plymouth County



JOBS SWEEP INTO REGION WITH WIND DEVELOPMENT

BY LU NELSEN, LUCASN@CFRA.ORG

Wind energy continues to grow in the U.S., especially in the heart of the country. With some of the best renewable resources available, this region has significant potential to generate clean energy while also reaping the benefits of development.

Those benefits take several forms, including direct payments to landowners that provide a new source of income. Projects also generate new tax revenues that broaden county tax bases or assist in funding essential services like fire and police departments, as well as local schools. New jobs are another benefit, either in the form of construction jobs when a project is being developed or as operations positions for the lifetime of a project.

Employment opportunities created by new wind development have a big impact on rural communities. According to the National Renewable Energy Labs' Jobs and Economic Development Impact modeling, a 100 megawatt (MW) project can employ up to 106 people for construction and construction-related services. These workers infuse new money into local economies when they stay in communities during the building phase.

To capture the benefits of wind development, we will need a work-



Laredo Ridge Wind Farm near Petersburg, Nebraska, will generate more than \$6 million over the first 20 years of operation to local taxing bodies and has eight permanent employees, according to NRG. The system went online in January 2011. | Photo by Rhea Landholm

force to help build projects. In states like Wyoming where wind energy development is still growing and resources are abundant, finding workers can present a barrier to building new projects in rural areas. Small population sizes make it difficult to find enough workers locally to construct wind farms.

The construction phase isn't the only part of wind energy development that is creating workforce demands. Once projects are built, they will require occasional maintenance from technicians on-site. Wind turbine technician is one of the fastest growing professions, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, and much of that is due to the expected growth of the wind energy industry.

These long-term operation jobs offer another benefit to rural communities – the chance for young people to return. Many of these jobs are based in or near small towns where wind energy projects are built. The growth of wind energy has created opportunities to bring new, well-paying jobs to rural areas, paving a path for young people to pursue careers in an expanding industry.

As wind energy continues to grow, there will be more possibilities to localize benefits of wind development. Whether it is from jobs based in communities near wind farms or the use of local labor and construction services while a wind farm is under construction, wind energy will continue to be an economic driver in rural areas.

FOOD SECURITY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

munity level has helped motivate renewed and increased investment from core funders. Recent awards from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Newman's Own Foundation, and the Peter Kiewit Foundation ensure the project will continue for the next three years.

Like all of our work at the Center, this effort is grounded in a sense of justice combined with a belief that the future can be brighter. The challenges we tackle often require patience, and the path to success can be long, wind-

ing, and sometimes steep. The prospect of achieving our goals can often seem impossible until we have arrived.

We are committed to continuing the pursuit of justice for these – and all – rural communities.



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

145 MAIN STREET, PO BOX 136 | LYONS, NE 68038-0136
CFRA.ORG | INFO@CFRA.ORG

Address Service Requested

11/17



#GIVINGTUESDAY™

MAKE A GIFT ONLINE ON TUESDAY, NOV. 28, AT [CFRA.ORG/GIVE](https://cfra.org/give)
YOUR DONATION AND IMPACT WILL BE DOUBLED BY A LIKE-MINDED, PRIVATE DONOR

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOOD SECURITY TAKES ROOT IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES

BY BRIAN DEPEW, BRIAND@CFRA.ORG

Six years ago, three members of our staff started meeting with representatives of the Santee Sioux Nation in Northeast Nebraska. The conversation centered on building food security for tribal members.

In-depth conversation and careful planning helped everyone who came to the table build trust with one another. Through dialogue, it became clear there was an opportunity to collaborate with local community members.

We started our first year with a simple approach: help people in communities with low incomes, a high diabetes rate, and limited access to fresh foods grow enough to supplement their food budgets, have some extra to sell,

and improve nutrition of family and neighbors. Perhaps some could build that into businesses. We held gardening classes, gave demonstrations of how to use fresh foods at home, advised family gardeners, and started a farmers market.

The project later expanded to the Omaha Nation two hours southeast of Santee. The work continues on both reservations today, attracting support and participation from neighboring communities, as well.

As part of the project, community members have now established more than 300 backyard and container gardens, and have launched farmers markets in the communities of Santee, Walthill, and Macy. This progress has led to

even more community involvement and local ownership.

The 10-year vision of the project team is to reach full food security in every household on each reservation. In the next two years, the goal is to expand access to fresh, nutritious food through gardening, and to increase community capacity to grow, prepare, preserve, and use fresh produce. Community members now tell us the project is helping foster community and cultural connections through gardening. Those connections include youth programs using food for cultural education and diversion from drug abuse.

This work requires a long-term investment. Success at the com-

—SEE FOOD SECURITY ON PAGE 7