

2002 Annual Report  
Kansas Rural Development Council

As another year comes to an end, the members of the Kansas Rural Development Council can feel proud that one of our more ambitious projects is in its final phase of fruition. The final portion of the rail study on maintenance and safety costs to local governments will be completed by the Kansas State University Economics Department by the end of the year. The timing of the completion of this study couldn't be better. At a time when State revenues are at a crises point, policy makers will have irrefutable evidence on the value of rail service in our rural areas of Kansas. An earlier study by Kansas State University indicated that lost short-line service in Western Kansas would lead to an increase in highway maintenance of just under \$50 million per year. This year's study will add the county's share of to that cost. While budget constraints will have a harsh impact on most of us in the near future, we must remember that through a commitment to cooperation and the forming of new partnerships we can stick to our long-term strategic approach to rural development.

Our first meeting of 2002 followed tradition and was held in Topeka. Two exciting and important programs were presented to us. The first was Mentoring Works and the second was the RD&D program in Kansas.

**John Green**, Director of Mentoring Works presented KRDC members an overview of the program. The program is designed to provide role models and mentors to new workers in the labor force. The program provides senior mentors to both young job seekers and established companies to ensure a quality work force and job retention. Companies such as GE Capital and United Parcel Service are using these senior mentors to motivate and educate new employees on how to make a difference. Whether transitioning people from Welfare to Work or counseling presently employed individuals, senior mentors help employees with work related problems as well as personal problems that affect their work habits.

The Mentoring Works program successfully transitions people from Welfare to Work by teaching life skills and work habits that lead to long term quality job performance. The program solicits mentors, helps train them and works with the employers in the deployment of the mentors. The mission of the program is “Provide America the best workforce in the world and teach employees that top quality workmanship is their key to success.” As proof that the program works, job turnover decreased from fifty percent to seventeen percent in the GE plant once the program was initiated.

**Peggy Blackman**, President, Kansas Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils and **Steve Parkin**, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service presented the RC&D program in Kansas.

Presently there are eight RC&D Councils in Kansas and they encompass sixty counties in the State. These Councils provide a framework for:

- Capacity building
- Economic development
- Environment and ecology

Some of the specific projects that the individual RC&D Councils have been involved in are as follows:

- Bio-energy
- Water Quality
- Ecosystems
- Conservation
- Micro-lending

**Elton Murrow**, USDA Rural Development presented the USDA Outreach Council program to KRDC. The Outreach Council, consisting of the following USDA agencies; Risk Management, KSU Research and Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Rural Development, was established to gather information about program and outreach needs of the different customer groups. The Outreach

Council addresses these needs of under-served customers; barriers to their participation; effective dissemination of information and ways to coordinate and monitor outreach efforts. The goal is to increase the participation of the underserved, including limited resource farmers, in USDA programs, with special emphasis on those who are socially disadvantaged or members of racial minority groups. The Outreach Council stressed the desire to partner with groups and organizations to enhance program delivery to underserved communities in Kansas.

The second quarterly meeting, our annual listening tour, was held in **Clay Center**. The Clay Center Chamber of Commerce hosted KRDC members. While in Clay Center we toured the Hutchinson/Mayrath Company, and three senior citizen homes: Presbyterian Manor, Medicalodge and Apollo Towers. We also listened to a panel of citizens of Clay County.

Our first stop was the **Hutchinson/Mayrath Company**. This company manufactures grain moving equipment and is the largest private employer in Clay Center. Mayrath developed its first portable auger in Dodge City in 1943. It later built a plant in Illinois. The Hutchinson Company started manufacturing grain equipment in the early 1950s' and was purchased by Mayrath in 1987 with Mayrath moving to Clay Center. The parent company is Global Industries of Grand Island, Nebraska.

The average number of years of experience for management is over twenty years and approximately twenty percent of the employees have over ten years experience. Thirty percent of the employees live outside of Clay Center. Since the mid 1970', Clay Center has lost approximately 600 jobs in agri-manufacturing. The current surge in international trade has helped the company maintain production levels.

The **Presbyterian Manor** is located on ground donated from the site of the old high school. Since its origins in 1968, the Manor has made many changes to keep up with the needs of the citizens of the area. Currently, the property has traditional nursing home facilities, assisted living facilities and individual standing apartments on the periphery of the facility's grounds.

Council members also toured the **Gran Villas** facility and had lunch at the **Apollo Towers**, a traditional senior citizen high-rise. The Gran Villas is a **Medicalodge** facility that is part of a Coffeyville, Kansas corporation with facilities in several Kansas communities. This facility consists of assisted living quarters and full care nursing service.

KRDC members also had the opportunity to listen to Clay County residents and elected officials discuss their challenges and opportunities. The presenters were:

**Alan Heigle**, farmer and President of the Clay County Farm Bureau, presented his insights into the future of agriculture in the area. Currently most farms have cow/calf operations and fifty percent of the cropland is in wheat. Less than ten percent of the crops are irrigated since irrigation water is pulled from surface water sources. All subordinating water-rights have been curtailed. Because of this and better technology, no-till farming is increasing in popularity.

**JoDee Haas**, Inhome Healthcare, provides personal home care not covered by Medicare and Medicaid for citizens in the area. Currently, eighty persons in Clay County are clients and they are served by seven professionals and two nurse's aids. Funding for persons unable to pay for services is paid through monies from the regional Area on Aging agency and a small local fund for emergencies. The Clay County Resource Group, consisting mostly of social service agencies, meets monthly to coordinate activities.

**Jane Gingles**, a consultant specializing in dementia, stressed the need for more specialized dementia and related training of care-givers. Approximately one third of the residents in the facilities Gingles consults suffer from Alzheimer's and dementia related conditions. She further expressed the need for more funding as well as training for adult care-givers in both licensed facilities and family situations.

School officials from **USD 379** addressed the current situation in Clay County and the state in general:

- It is difficult to recruiting new teachers based on the low starting salaries and some districts do not pay health benefits;
- There are over 400 vacancies in general education with the largest number of vacancies in the math and science areas of emphasis;
- Quality education is not a problem at this time but it could be in the future;
- Forty-four percent of the teachers are over fifty years of age;
- Two-thirds of the school districts have experienced a decrease in school enrollment; and
- Salary and benefits make up seventy-five percent of the school budget.

**Todd Schagle**, Wall's True Value Hardware, discussed the challenges facing rural retail establishments. One of the major problems facing merchants is floor planning and general management of debt load. Finding information to make good sound business decisions is also a difficult task and finding time to do this is especially difficult. Other challenges facing rural retailers are: small labor pool, high cost of health care and benefits for employees, high property tax burden and high costs involved with market expansion.

**Rita Wallenburg**, Meadowlark Hospice, Alzheimer's and dementia support Group, presented her organization's programs. The support group's mission is to teach nurses, aids and other caregivers how to care for persons suffering from terminal illness and dementia related diseases. The organization provides assistance to Clay, Washington, Marshall, Cloud and Republic Counties.

**State Senator Mark Taddiken** discussed the need for economic development as a way to increase the State's budget. In order to achieve this goal, Sen. Taddiken stated that the State needed high-speed access, to focus on many small companies employing six to twelve persons, shift to green power, increase value-added agriculture, increase dairy farms and develop Kansas tax incentives.

The Kansas Rural Development Council's August meeting was conducted in **Great Bend** and **Hoisington**. This gave KRDC members an opportunity to view developments in Great Bend and Cheyenne Bottoms wetlands as well as visit with the City Manager of Hoisington to learn from his experiences in dealing with a severe natural disaster.

Council members were privileged to have an opportunity to receive an update on the short-line rail study. **Professor Mike Babcock** and two of his graduate students from Kansas State University presented the preliminary results of their two-phased research on the impact of lost rail service to Western Kansas. Babcock and the graduate students explained to Council members how changing patterns of grain shipping has impacted the roads in Kansas. Currently twenty-eight percent of grain is hauled by train and the remaining eight-two percent of the grain is hauled by truck. Forty-five percent of the wheat is hauled by rail while only two percent of the soybeans are hauled by rail.

Babcock stated that if Kansas would lose its short-line railroad infrastructure, it would cost Kansas an additional \$50 million in road repairs annually. If one takes into account user fees and taxes paid by trucks, the actual cost to Kansas tax payers will still be well in excess of \$40 million. The research on traffic safety costs and the county portion of road maintenance costs will be completed at the end of this year. Babcock used over 90,000 fields in Western Kansas to determine the amount of grain moving in the counties. He also has developed data on the four major crops and looked at long-term yield averages to determine grain quantities.

Council members were led on a tour of the **CPI** facility in Great Bend. CPI, a subsidiary of A.G. Edwards, manages retirement accounts for major corporations. Currently CPI manages over \$2 billion in retirement accounts. Of particular interest is that eighty percent of the 430 employees are female. Barton County Community College has developed a pension administration curriculum to aid CPI in training employees.

**Nick Gregory**, City of Great Bend, informed KRDC members of the City's future plans to develop a wetlands interpretive center in the Cheyenne Bottoms wetlands. Cheyenne Bottoms and the nearby Quivira National Wildlife Refuge make up a world class wetlands complex of global importance to migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Nearly half of all North American shorebirds pass through the Bottoms during spring migration. Great Bend and the surrounding area are in the process of raising money to build an interpretive center that will attract nature tourists and serve as a valuable model for wetlands conservation. The experiences at the interpretive center will be designed to emphasize the dynamics of motion and change in a wetland habitat. The Center will be developed and designed as a self-sustaining ecotourism enterprise.

Following the presentation by Gregory, KRDC members were treated to a twilight tour of the wetlands area and the future site of the interpretive center. The Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area encompasses nearly 20,000 acres of wetlands. The nearby Quivira National Wildlife Refuge contains over 20,000 acres of prairie grasses, sand dunes, canals, timber and salt marsh habitat that is rare to Kansas.

**Hoisington City Manager, Allen Dinkel**, explained to KRDC members the problems that his community faced when a F4 tornado ripped a path through the community destroying a third of the city. Dinkel addressed the immediate response to the emergency and the long-term efforts of clean-up and rebuilding. The many social issues that arose during the clean-up were as difficult to address as the physical efforts. One of the major lessons learned was the use of the “county disaster plan”. Dinkel stated that the Barton County Disaster Plan was an excellent blueprint to follow. He credited the successful clean-up and rebuilding to the plan. Communication within the community was difficult since most of the residents did not have access to telephone, television and the local cable service and announcement channel.

The relief agencies were a great help in the early part of the clean-up. The Red Cross served meals for 10 days and spent \$1 million and cooked over 80,000 meals. The Salvation Army served meals for a month.

# Chronological History of KRDC Projects

## Major Projects:

### Banner Creek

The Banner Creek Reservoir Project was approved for construction in 1996. The reservoir was to provide water for municipal and industrial use as well as flood control and recreation. When the Kansas Highway Plan called for an upgrading of U.S. Highway 75 from a two-lane to a four-lane limited access controlled expressway traversing Banner Creek, the staging of the detention dam became a critical element in the cost of the highway project. The design of the bridge, hence the cost, hinged on the construction of the Banner Creek Dam. Design of the bridge had to start soon. If the dam was to be considered in the design, the bridge cost was estimated to be \$426,000 and if the dam was not considered, a larger bridge needed to be designed at a cost of \$667,000. The Kansas Department of Transportation advised the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service that the larger bridge design was necessary since the funding for the detention dam was not guaranteed.

At the request of the Jackson County Commissioners, KRDC helped accelerate the construction of the Banner Creek detention dam. KRDC was able to bring about the realignment of the time tables of the State and Federal agencies as well as the local governmental units so that the small bridge design could be used in the construction of U.S. Highway 75. This was done through the moving of the detention dam construction date from 1996 to 1993 and getting the appropriate funding while changing the highway construction of the impacted section timetable to coincide with the detention dam construction. This governmental cooperation directly saved over **\$240,000** of Federal and State highway construction funds.

The following entities were involved:

- Jackson County
- City of Holton
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Kansas Department of Transportation
- Delaware Watershed District
- Jackson County Rural Water District
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- Kansas Water Office
- Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
- Kansas Department of Agriculture
- Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- Board of Indian Affairs

### **Halstead Flood Project**

The community of Halstead has been plagued by flooding along the Little Arkansas River since it was founded in the last century. Coincidentally, a historic event casting Kansas' place in agriculture happened on a site very near the community on the Workentin Homestead. Hard red winter wheat was first introduced to Kansas at this site. Approximately 100 years later the site became prominent again. This time it stalled a \$9.4 million flood control project designed to protect the residence of Halstead. The flood control project, started in 1974, painstakingly worked its way to fruition in obtaining the necessary federal, state and local contributions and appropriations. Land acquisition had been completed and contracts had been let. Due to conflicting ideologies on the treatment of registered historical property an impasse was reached that threatened the availability of State funds for the project and also the enactment of a \$4,000 a day contract delay clause.

The Kansas Rural Development Council was asked to help mediate the situation. All vested parties were contacted and a chronology of events was constructed. After close study of the information gathered and understanding each of entity's position, KRDC invited all parties to a conference to try to resolve their differences. The conference led to the resolution of most of the differences among the parties. However, the resolution of one main obstacle remained to be resolved. Negotiations to insure fulfillment of the regulations as prescribed by the National Historic Preservation Act were terminated on July 7, 1992. According to the "Act" sixty days following the "termination of consultation" can be used by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to review and make final comment. The flood control project did not have this much time; on August 4 1992 the contract delay clause would become effective at a cost to tax payers of \$4,000 per day. KRDC made it a point to cut the sixty day response period to thirty days so that this money could be saved. Through the action of the KRDC with the aid of then Senator Bob Dole and Congressman Dan Glickman, whose district the project is contained, the response time was cut to thirty days and a memorandum of agreement was signed. Through these efforts **\$120,000** of needless taxpayer expense was saved and the residents of Halstead received the flood protection they needed.

The following entities were involved:

- Kansas Historical Society
- U.S. Department of Interior
- Senator Bob Dole (Ret.)
- Representative Dan Glickman (Ret.)
- Tulsa District of Corps of Engineers
- Western Regional Advisory Council of Historic Preservation
- National Council on Historic Preservation
- Owners of historical property
- City of Halstead

### **Single Loan Application Process**

The “Single Loan Application Process” was created after the Kansas Rural Development Council recognized that several government agencies were all requiring the same basic information from small business loan applicants yet all were using different forms. The amount of paper work and time spent applying for state and federal assistance was found to be burdensome to small business owners and could potentially hinder economic growth, particularly in the rural areas of Kansas. The single loan application process simplified lending by utilizing just one application form. The U.S. Small Business Administration’s 7(a) guarantee loan application served as the base document as it contained all information required by the other lending agencies. Any additional information required by an individual agency was supplied through supplemental forms.

The major benefits of the “process” include the following:

1. Ease of accessibility to multiple funding opportunities by the borrower and its lender.
2. Promotion of joint funding by participating federal and state agencies. To date, these programs tend to be somewhat mutually exclusive of each other.
3. Through more standardized evaluation of credit and standardized information of credit criteria, it is anticipated that more prudent investments of public funds will result as well as a lower incidence of failed loans by borrowers.
4. Reduced paperwork and filing and a more standardized closing and servicing of loans. A standardized approach would provide for greater prudence in loan making and also closing and servicing activities. This would also carry forward to the standardization of compliance issues such as appraisals, environmental assessments and etc.

The Kansas Rural Development Council undertook the following steps to make this simplified loan process a reality:

1. Permission to use Kansas as a pilot project was obtained from USDA Rural Development and U.S. Small Business Administration.

2. Loan officers from USDA Rural Development and SBA compared all points of the Rural Development Business and Industry guaranteed loan application from and SBA 7(a) guaranteed loan form. They then developed a matrix comparing these points. It was then determined what additional information was needed by Rural Development in order to use the SBA 7(a) form.
3. Supplements to the SBA 7(a) form were then developed for the additional material required by Rural Development.
4. Once the SBA 7(a) form and the supplements were printed into a usable form, loan requests were solicited.
5. Once a rural manufacturing plant interested in expanding was identified, the borrower and lender were asked to participate in the project and the single loan application was tested.
6. Upon completion of the loan, the process was further refined and the two guaranteed loan forms were again compared since both Rural Development and SBA revised their application forms.
7. Sent information on comparative analysis to USDA Rural Development in Washington DC so that SBA 7(a) guaranteed loan application can be included on the electronic Business and Industry loan form. With this form, a lender and borrower can fill out one common entry from and have both the Business and Industry from and the SBA 7(a) from printed at the same time.
8. The excitement of the borrower and the lender was one of the intangible benefits derived from this demonstration. The two points that stand out besides the reduction of paperwork and time were the fact that the government agencies were working together to make the process easier for them and the actual credit analysis by the bank was simplified by using the more familiar SBA forms.

The participating agencies were:

- U.S. Small Business Administration
- USDA Rural Development
- South Central Kansas Economic Development District
- U.S. Department of Treasury
- Kansas Association of Certified Development Companies

### **Short-Line Rail Abandonment**

The loss of a freight rail system is devastating to rural communities. Lost rail service impacts not only the shippers but it also effects farmers and local government as well as the entire community. The impacts on rural communities are:

- Lower grain prices received by farmers
- Higher transportation costs and lower profits for shippers
- Loss of market options for shippers
- Lost economic development opportunities in rural communities resulting in less diversification of employment
- Higher road maintenance and reconstruction costs

When the Kansas Rural Development Council was approached by the Kansas Electric Power Cooperative to help stem the tide of rail abandonment in South Central Kansas, we immediately delved into the problem. Since 1965 Kansas had lost approximately 30 percent of its rail lines and was on the verge of losing many more miles in the near future, it was imperative that a broad based coalition of stakeholders and policy makers be formed. Through personal contact, public forum and invited stakeholder meetings a task force was initiated to tackle the problems. The following groups helped in this process:

- Operators of Class III Railroads (short-line)
- Operators of Class I Railroads
- Legislators on the Transportation and Agriculture Committees
- Grain shippers in South Central and Southwest Kansas
- Kansas Department of Transportation
- Representatives from the port authority operating a short-line
- Associations representing shippers and producers
- Kansas Grain and Feed Association
- Kansas Farm Bureau
- Kansas Farmers Union
- The Kansas Association of Counties
- The Surface Transportation Board
- Economists with expertise in short-line railroads
- U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Transportation
- U.S. Senators Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts
- U.S. Congressmen Jerry Moran and Todd Tiahrt

KRDC prepared and presented the following information to the newly formed task force:

- Overview of the past rail abandonment
- Current rail and possible future abandonment
- Economic impact of lost rail service to rural communities
- Economic viability of operating a short-line railroad
- The purpose and development of a multi-county port authority
- Information on Kansas programs designed to help rail
- Information on what other States were doing for rail service

The salient points that emerged from the discussions with the interest groups, policy makers and the task force participants were:

- Kansas lacks a clear policy on rail abandonment
- Not all costs associated with lost rail service are immediately felt
- More study is needed to measure the potential economic losses suffered by shippers, producers and communities when rail is abandoned
- A public entity that has the authority to purchase and maintain existing rail is necessary for the continuance of a freight rail system

The long-range agenda adopted by the Council and the task force was:

- Ask for legislation to create a non-binding resolution to temporarily declare a moratorium on rail abandonment.
- Pursue multi-county port authorities where possible.
- Develop a Kansas rural transportation plan.
- Develop an economic model to help local governments determine the costs of lost rail service.

To date, the Kansas Rural Development Council has been able to:

- Foster the environment that created the sale of over 900 miles of endangered rail service in South Central Kansas, thus keeping the service operating
- Educate shippers and communities on the processes of warding off threatened abandonments
- Obtain a **\$150,000** grant from the Kansas Department of Transportation for the study and the development of a model to predict costs associated with lost rail service. To date, the Kansas State University study has indicated that Kansas will have to spend an additional **\$50 million** on road repair if short-line rail service would be lost
- Early next year Kansas will have the costs of increased road and bridge repair to counties and the increased safety costs as well

## **Other Significant Accomplishments:**

### **High Plains Trade Satellite Conference and Trade Study**

With a **\$15,000** grant from USDA Economic Research Service, the Kansas Rural Development Council and the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development conducted a conference on trade potential for the High Plains and developed an inventory of available international trade assistance programs. The initiative created awareness and excitement for international trade. Others participating were:

- State Rural Development Councils of Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Colorado
- Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank
- USDA Economic Research Service
- Kansas State University

### **Job Training Study**

KRDC obtained a **\$20,000** grant from USDA Economic Research Service that made possible a study of job training and retraining. These funds also made possible greater research into rural job service needs. This research study was the foundation of the Governor's One-Stop Career Service Center project of the Kansas Department of Human Resources.

### **Resource Database Project**

KRDC designed a menu driven computer program with 280 separate federal and state assistance programs. Forty separate agencies and departments participated by submitting their respective assistance programs. At the height of the program, over 700 copies were in use in Kansas as well as being available on the Information Network of Kansas web site.

## **Rural Housing**

The Kansas Rural Development Council conducted a series of housing workshops designed to increase the knowledge of financial enhancements so communities could increase their housing supply. Over fifty percent of the attendees were bankers and another twenty-five percent were city employees. A survey of rural participants was conducted a year after the workshops. The response of the mail survey was thirty-five percent. All responded that they had learned enough about housing assistance programs that they felt they could be an asset to the community. Two respondents indicated that housing projects had been started in their communities as direct result of the knowledge gained at the workshops. Agencies and organizations involved either directly or assisting with information were:

- Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing
- Kansas Bankers Association
- Federal Home Loan Bank
- Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank
- USDA Rural Development
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Farm Credit Services
- Manufactured Housing Association
- Kansas Cooperative Association
- Kansas Association of Realtors

## **Kansas Housing Partners**

The Kansas Housing Partners was established to help Kansans have better access to available housing programs. The partnership was designed to get existing program information out to the people who need it the most. Representatives from key housing program agencies and organizations make up the Kansas Housing Partners. The following is the list of participants:

- USDA Rural Development
- Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- FannieMae (Federal National Mortgage Association)
- Kansas Cooperative Council
- Kansas State University Research and Extension
- Federal Home Loan Bank
- Federal Housing Administration
- Housing and Credit Counseling Inc.

The group designed a set of housing request forms for individuals wanting housing information and communities wanting help with their housing needs. These forms were available at each county extension office, public areas and the KRDC web page. The individual or community can fill out the one-page request form and send it to the address on the form. The Clearinghouse at the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing served as the intake function and distributed the requests to the individual member agencies. Once the appropriate agencies received the request, that agency or agencies directly contacted the individual or community.

### **Native American Housing Forum**

The Kansas Rural Development Council assisted USDA Rural Development with a series of four public housing forums designed to increase home ownership of Native Americans. The Council assisted in the design, development and implementation of these forums. KRDC enlisted the aid of the Kansas Housing Partners and invited local lenders to participate. Some of the specific issues discussed were:

- Family ownership of property
- Trust land ownership
- Authority over eviction procedures
- Repair of existing structures
- Infrastructure needs

Aside from the Kansas Housing Partners, the following participated at the housing forums:

- Silver Lake Bank of Hiawatha
- The Morrill and Janes Bank and Trust Company of Hiawatha
- Kansas State Bank of Holton
- Denison State Bank of Holton

### **Beginning Farmer Program**

With one of the most serious problems facing Kansas agriculture, the dwindling number of family farms, KRDC developed and produced 20,000 copies of a brochure that has a matrix of all finance programs available for beginning and existing farmers. The matrix is kept updated and is available on the KRDC web page. By working with the USDA agencies, KSU Research and Extension, the State Bankers Associations, local cooperatives, Farm Credit Service and vocational educational sites all copies of the matrix were distributed.

KRDC received a **\$5,000** grant from the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University to develop a database of beginning farmer programs in the United States. Kansas State University assisted in the development of this database.

### **Rural Healthcare**

Under the guidance of the Director of the Bureau of Local and Rural Health, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, KRDC formed a task force to develop an initiative to aid rural decision makers on healthcare policy. The task force consisted of the following:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Rural Hospital Administrators
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Northwest Kansas Regional Medical Center
- Kansas Hospital Association
- Kansas Department of Human Resources

- Kansas State University Research and Extension
- Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
- University of Kansas School of Medicine
  - Office of Rural Health Education and Services
  - Office of Primary Care
- Bureau of Local and Rural Health, Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- Local government
- The SelfHelp Network

The task force developed a project that would build the capacity of local businesspersons and community leaders in planning for changes in healthcare delivery. Task force members felt that local capacity building through the collective expertise of its membership would be the best method of aiding rural communities. Two White Paper reports were developed by Rural Health Consultants. The first white paper was titled “Rural Healthcare Systems and Economic Development: Understanding the Relationships and Building Strategic Partnerships” and the second white paper was titled “Best Practices: Examples of Community Leaders Partnering with Health Providers To Assure Access to Care of Rural Communities”

The first white paper addressed economic issues and relationships between the community and the healthcare delivery systems. This paper was designed to heighten the awareness of the economic impact of healthcare or loss of healthcare in a local community. The second white paper demonstrated what rural communities have done to increase local services and/or overcome adverse healthcare delivery situations through examples.

A workshop was conducted for an eighteen county area in Northwest Kansas. Participants included local businesspersons, elected officials, chamber of commerce executives, economic development directors, hospital administrators and hospital board members.

### **Veterans Healthcare**

The Kansas Rural Development Council held a press conference in Hays to announce the signing of an agreement between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and a physicians group in Hays. The purpose of the agreement was to provide medical care for veterans in Northwest Kansas. In the past, veterans had to travel to a Veterans facility for medical care. With this new agreement, primary care treatment will be provided close to home. Officials from Veterans Affairs, representatives from the physicians group in Hays and U.S. Congressman Jerry Moran were on hand for the signing.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs had been mandated to increase outreach to the point of having care within 50 miles of each veteran. KRDC and its healthcare task force helped persuade VA representatives it would mutually beneficial to form public/private partnerships to accomplish this task. The other alternative was to have a stand-alone VA facility competing with local healthcare establishments.

### **Rural Policy Forums**

The Kansas Rural Development Council has been a primary sponsor and participant of an annual rural policy symposium at Kansas State University. This year was the eighth event. These forums generally delve into issues of the day that impact rural Kansas communities. Panels of local, state and federal elected officials have addressed symposium attendees.

### **Community Assessment Team**

The Kansas Rural Development Council and State's U.S. Department of Agriculture's designated Enterprise Community (Leoti/Wichita County) worked together to pilot a Community Assessment Team designed to help the community with its development strategy. The purpose of the program was to assist local community leaders in the assessment of resources and challenges and provide detailed assistance in accomplishing their development goals. A formal written report detailing information learned from the interviews and recommendations was presented to the community. Team members spend three full days in the community interviewing community members. The members of the team were:

- Loren Medley, Kansas Electric Power Cooperative
- Ned Webb, Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing
- DeAnna Gerhardt, USDA Rural Development
- Gary Satter, Glacial Hill RC&D
- Steve Bittel, KRDC