

## **2003 Annual Report**

### **Kansas Rural Development Council**

With another interesting and challenging year behind us it is time again to reflect on our accomplishments of the past year and look forward to the challenges and opportunities facing rural Kansans. We were fortunate enough to get assistance from the U.S. Department of Transportation to start the process of developing a long range plan to optimize the State's freight hauling capabilities in order to derive the maximum economic return to our producers, shippers and rural communities.

We also embarked on a new adventure in training. Last spring, along with USDA Rural Development, we launched the Grassroots Community Development Training program. This highly interactive program is designed to train rural community leaders as well as field personnel from various agencies and organizations.

Our first meeting in 2003, as in the past, was conducted in Topeka. **Secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Adrian Polansky** was our featured speaker. Secretary Polansky had an open discussion with KRDC members enumerating the issues facing the new administration and rural Kansas and their response to these issues. Secretary Polansky emphasized the need for better rural development coordination and programming. To address these points, he indicated that the Dept. of Agriculture would work closely with the Ks. Department of Commerce, Agriculture Marketing Division and other rural development allies. Sec. Polansky also indicated that the Governor will appoint a Rural Life Taskforce. The goal of the taskforce will be examine ways to preserve, renew and sustain the value of economic and cultural life in rural Kansas. The Taskforce would look at four major issue areas:

- Energy and Infrastructure
- Health and Human Services
- Agriculture and Diversified Economy
- Government and Community Empowerment

The taskforce is expected to report its findings at the end of the year. Both the Governor and Secretary Polansky expect the taskforce report to be instrumental in the development of rural policy for the State.

The second Kansas Rural Development Council meeting was our annual listening tour. This year the tour was conducted in Douglas County. This gave members an opportunity to better understand the challenges that agriculture faces when cohabitating with urban interests. Also, we had an opportunity to view how traditional agriculture adapts to urban markets.

**Greg Shipe**, vintner and owner of **Davenport Winery** discussed the challenges of grape growing. Davenport Winery started growing grapes in 1990. Most of the varieties of grapes growing in his vineyard have European lineage and the wine is sold on the premises. One of the more unique aspects of the winery is that volunteers help pick grapes and are rewarded in the fall with a party and the unveiling of his new wine.

**John and Karen Pendleton, Pendleton's Country Market**, were traditional producers through most of the 1980's but changed some of their farming techniques during the farm crises of that decade. They started with ½ acre of asparagus which has grown to 25 acres. The Pendletons also built a greenhouse to raise hydroponics. The farm currently raises vegetables and flowers that are sold in their country store, which is located on the farm and at the farmers market in Lawrence and Kansas City. They also sell flowers wholesale and design arrangements for specific occasions.

**Roger and Sue Pine** operate the **Pine Family Farm** in partnership with their grown children. This is the fifth generation on the farm. The family farm consists of 3,000 acres of owned and rented land. Three hundred acres of the land is dedicated to turf-grass production. The Pine family has always been entrepreneurial in their farming practices. In the past, they have raised potatoes, popcorn, confectioner's soybeans, and chrysanthemums. The farm is located in an ideal area for the turf-grass production. It is

located between the Kansas City market and the Topeka and Lawrence market. The area universities, golf courses and new subdivisions are ideal markets for the product. Aside from the equipment, the biggest difference in growing turf-grass is the different style of marketing needed to sell the product.

A separate panel discussed alternative crops and practices. Methods of organizing, finding resources and assistance were presented. One of the major hurdles farmers face, is the traditional lender. A good sound business plan and a good understanding of marketing of the final product are necessary to convince traditional lenders for financing.

**Mark and Brenna Wulfkuhle** operate the **Wulfkuhle Family Farms** along with Mark's mother. The operation specializes in custom cattle feeding, a cow-calf herd, row crops and a haying operation. The cattle operation consists of a 600 head confined feeding feedlot with an additional 400 head capacity of back grounding pens. The farm also has 500 head of cows which graze on 1,700 acres of pasture. The row-crop operation consists of corn, soybeans and wheat. All of the corn is consumed by the feeding operation, the cattle graze on the wheat and all hay not consumed on the farm is sold commercially. The family also owns and operates a custom application service.

### **Grassroots Community Development Training**

The Kansas Rural Development Council and USDA Rural Development teamed up to create a basic community development training school for rural communities and agency personnel that have rural development responsibilities. The result of this collaborative effort was the Grassroots Community Development Training School. The objectives of the training were:

- Enhance individual ability to be a positive force in developing our communities
- Build upon the developmental capacity of organizations/agencies
- Increase the effective use of skills and concepts of community development in a variety of settings

- Help people develop their community's desired future

To accomplish this task we turned to the expertise of the Missouri Extension Service. Using Missouri's model and their trainers, we were able to develop a curriculum that fit the needs of Kansas. The first training session was conducted in June using cadre from both University of Missouri and Kansas State University. The second session, conducted in October, used Kansas trainers only.

Over eighty persons have participated in the two training schools. Aside from Kansas, three surrounding states have sent personnel to these sessions. The training schools have brought together a broad spectrum of disciplines. Attendees from the following organizations/agencies have participated: USDA Rural Development, Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), Congressional staff members, state legislators, K-State Research and Extension, Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Small Business Development Centers, Kansas Farm Bureau, utilities, local economic development members, local community development directors and rural community leaders and volunteers.

The participants were introduced to community development concepts and methods. These concepts and their corresponding methodology were framed in a context that offered practical application for modern problem solving. A brief outline of the curriculum follows:

- Principles of Community Development
  - Define community development
  - Examine the basic beliefs, assumptions and values that underpin community development
  - Identify the basic principles that guide practice
- Introduction to Community Facilitation
  - Integrate learned concepts and methods into ongoing work with local communities and regional groups

- Identify and practice facilitation skills appropriate for a variety of settings
  - Relate basic facilitation skills to actual work situations in communities
- Community Development Process
  - Acknowledgment of the multiple relationship among community issues and the identification of the characteristics of processes that help manage those complex relationships
  - Explore the complexity of community issues
  - Understand the use of mind-mapping as a technique for developing group understanding of complex issues
- Working with Boards and Commissions
  - The identification of the three basic duties of a board of directors or members of a steering committee
  - The explanation of the four critical functions of a board
  - The understanding of the complexities of a board's activities in areas of leadership, teaming and communication in community development
- Developing a Community Vision
  - The summarization of the relationship between purpose, vision and action planning
  - The application of the processes demonstrated for developing a community group's vision
  - The translation of that vision in action plans for implementation
  - The reorganization of how purpose, vision and action planning processes contribute to the community's development of local policy and involvement and commitment of citizens
  - The differentiation between community planning processes that are futures- and capacity-oriented and those that are deficiency-based
- Assessing the Community

- The identification of limiting perceptions and paradigms often operating in the community
  - The reorganization of how these expectations and perceptions act as a filter that screens what is seen, heard and observed and that may prevent community development workers from accurately understanding the environment in which they work
  - Aid communities identify and recognize for themselves their limiting expectations and perceptions
  - The identification of primary community information – the interests, concerns, resources and issues of people, organizations, institutions and firms in the community
  - The development of a working system for recording and maintaining such information in a way useful to development work
- Finding Resources
  - Community Economic Development
    - The explanation of the methodology of the economic activity within a community and a region.
    - A detailed explanation and practical application of analytical tools to measure economic activity
    - The development of the mechanics for a community economic development plan
  - Practitioner's View

An anecdotal comment made by a Community Development Director may be the best summary of the Grassroots Training Schools. In a conversation shortly after participating in one of the sessions, the director commented that he set up a series of meetings with the neighborhood improvement associations in his community and was planning to use the facilitation processes refined and honed at the training to make the NIAs more effective.

## **Public Forums on Short-Line Rail Service**

Since 1965 Kansas has lost 30 percent of its rail lines to abandonment. The impact of additional lost rail service will be costly not only to producers but to all Kansans. In fact, if Kansas would lose its short-line service, it could cost Kansas taxpayers an additional \$57.8 million per year in road maintenance costs and another \$20.7 million in grain handling costs, or slightly over \$0.05 per bushel. These grain handling costs would be shouldered by Kansas producers. Western Kansas counties would bear a disproportionate share of all related costs. The North Central and South Central regions of Kansas would shoulder the burden of an additional \$12 million per year in road maintenance cost while the Northwest region's cost would be slightly over \$6 million per year. This information was from a K-State University study that was commissioned by the Kansas Rural Development Council. **See attachment for detailed damage estimates for the western counties.**

Given the potential negative effects of short-line railroad abandonment on rural Kansas communities it is important that Kansas policymakers know the effects of rail abandonment in order to develop a state rural transportation plan that affectively deals with the potential impacts. Rural Kansas counties need to know the impacts related to the loss of short-line rail service. Since some of the incremental truck traffic will occur on county roads, county road officials need to be able to determine the direct costs of increased road maintenance and the cost of increased safety risks from additional heavy truck traffic on county roads.

The Kansas Rural Development Council conducted a series of public meetings to discuss county specific road maintenance costs and solicit public input for future policy recommendations. Transportation experts and state officials were on hand to provide information and listen to local concerns and recommendations. Representatives from producer groups, feed and grain handlers, city and county government, freight haulers, legislators and state elected officials attended. The public forums were conducted in Beloit, Colby, Garden City and Hutchinson.

## **Kansas Rural Policy Symposium**

The annual Kansas Rural Policy Symposium was conducted at Kansas State University with remote sites in Colby, Garden City and Chanute. The Theme this year was “Crafting Our Own Bootstraps: Making the Regional Approach Work”. This year’s program brought together panelists who discussed the issues that percolated to the surface at the Governor’s Prosperity Summits and a panel of state legislators who responded to these issues and discussed possible policy directions.