



2016 Community Contributions

Early in the year, Pender Economic Development (PED) coordinator Diann Ballard collaborated with Northeast Nebraska Economic Development for the Village of Thurston to see if they could apply for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to assist in the village's annexation process. The costs of this project were expected to be in the arena of \$20,000, and the assistance of CDBG funds would pay for more than half of those expenses.

The new townhomes, Logan Valley Cottages (LVC), were completed and possession was finalized with ownership passing to Pender Community Development (PCD) in late January. Nikki Ferraro of rural Pender was hired as the property manager for LVC, as well as the Towne Centre Apartments, effective Feb. 1. She currently works with existing and potential tenants and all related governmental entities.

PCD agreed to accept and possess ownership of the Pender Community Center project at its February meeting. Soon after, the bid letting was released for this project.

In mid-spring, work continued on a Downtown Revitalization Grant, which was submitted to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development on May 26. This is a planning grant that will assist the Pender community in identifying needs in the village's general commerce area (Main Street). These needs then become the focus of a follow-up grant.

Pender Community Development has updated its Pender brochures that are available for local events and visitors to the Pender-Thurston area. The brochures highlight area businesses, attractions and the community. Those who would like to utilize these brochures to assist with promoting a local event may contact Ballard at 402-922-1652 or pendereconomic@abbnebraska.com.

Ballard worked with Susan Strahm and Pender Times publisher Jason Sturek to have the Pender-Thurston website feature publications/promotions for the Barn Quilt Tour. A video slideshow was created with a majority of the barn quilts being showcased. To view the video, go online to penderthurston.com.

Ballard also assisted with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Entrepreneur Camp held in Pender in late June. The camp allowed youngsters to develop an entrepreneurial idea, create a product and then sell the product. After they made their sales, they reviewed their outcomes and determined profits and losses. The camp was hosted by Pender Public Schools with eight participants.

PCD is currently assisting in the writing of a grant for the Thurston County Law Enforcement Center. The funds, if awarded, will be used to complete landscaping for the facility upon building completion.

Pender Economic Development Coordinator Diann Ballard is working with the Village of Thurston and the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District to determine if Thurston could be eligible for a Community Development Block Grant. The Village of Thurston would like to annex several areas of its community into the village to increase tax revenues. This process costs nearly

\$20,000. To begin the process for a CDBG grant, a 'low to moderate' income survey has been completed with over 53 percent of the village residents meeting the required guidelines. The grant writing process will start next. If the process is successful, the village hopes to receive 65 percent of the required cost via this grant.

Ballard is also worked with Blue Ox, Blu Jet and Logan Valley Sales on hosting a Manufacturing Day in October. They secured the date, advertising and contacted six area schools to try to recruit students to see what the new manufacturing processes have to offer.

When the lodging tax was passed back in 2013, it provided a manner to generate funds to promote tourism in Thurston County. To date, PED has received over \$3,000 from these revenues. The Tourism Committee has met and developed a grant application that was approved by the Thurston County Board and planned to advertise for applicants in October.

Pender Community Development provided a letter of support for the ReVision process. The group is submitting for a federal grant, "Pathways 2 Tomorrow," for future educational monies for rural schools.

The Thurston County Law Enforcement Center landscaping grant was submitted to the Nebraska Arboretum recently. They have contacted the grant representative, Leonard Peters, and requested a site visit to review the project and area support. Peters is working on getting this set up. This is a great sign that it has a high potential to be funded.

Manufacturing Day was held on Oct. 7. There were three local employers who participated with tours and snacks for the general public. The number of folks who took advantage of this opportunity was significantly less than in prior years, but there were students from an area school (Allen) that were able to take part in the Blue Ox tour.

Advertising for grants utilizing the lodging tax dollars was published in the The Pender Times and The Winnebago News in October. These publications will hopefully drive up interest in promoting tourism within our county. The Tourism Committee meets in January to review any/all applications.

The Thurston County Law Enforcement Center landscaping grant site visit was successful, and we were awarded this grant. We are currently working as part of the Green Team to implement the grant and have a design and layout completed. Leonard Peters is the coordinator of this grant and will be completing the bulk of the work for the county.

Diann continues to work with Jan at NENED on the Thurston annexation process. We received the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for \$30,000 and the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority Grant (NIFA) for \$6,750 to offset costs for the comprehensive plan, housing study, surveying costs, zoning and grant administration.