

2001 Annual Report Executive Summary

Wichita County Enterprise Community

The Wichita County Enterprise Community began to enjoy the fruits of their labor as they celebrated the advancements in their benchmarks and the effects those benchmarks had on the community. The EC's most significant accomplishment was the construction and opening of Great Plains Family Dentistry.

The opening of the facility created four new jobs and resulted in five new residents in the county. By the end of 2001, the facility had a patient base of 1,000 people from 15 Kansas counties and four Colorado counties. Funding for the project came from the EC's Revolving Loan Fund, USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant, and Wheatland Electric Cooperative's Revolving Loan Fund established with a USDA Rural Utility Service Grant. In other business development areas, the Enterprise Community formed a consortium with five other western Kansas counties to make application for an Enterprise Facilitation pilot project which will help develop an entrepreneurial development program in the region. The EC also developed a business retention program and implemented it in the fall of 2001, contacting 17% of the businesses by the end of the year.

Capitalizing on the assets of the area, the Enterprise Community began an initiative to recruit a wind energy company to the county. Two interested companies visited the EC during 2001; both have contracted with local landowners to install wind data collecting equipment to study to potential project.

The EC also continues to work with interested dairyman seeking sites to develop large-scale dairy operations. Two dairymen made site visits in 2001. In another effort to create better markets for local producers, the EC organized and started a Farmer's Market in 2001. The Market was open each Saturday morning from July 21 through the end of September and was a huge success, with as many as 8-12 vendors participating on any given Saturday. In an effort to improve the physical appearance of the Enterprise Community area and improve the EC's ability to attract both business and residents, several projects were initiated in 2001. A Business Improvement Grant program was developed to encourage businesses to improve the appearances of the major business districts of the EC, with four applications being received by the application deadline in December.

A Community Improvement Award was initiated which resulted in two blighted properties being cleaned, with an owner investment of more than \$12,137.00 in cash and labor. And, the Enterprise Community partnered with the City of Leoti and several property owners to submit a commercial and residential demolition Community Development Block Grant of \$216,200.00 for the demolition of 7 commercial and 2 residential properties. The Enterprise Community partnered with Great Plains Development, Inc. and was awarded a \$37,290.00 USDA Housing Preservation Grant in 2001, with projects commencing in 2002. The EC sponsored another Homebuyers workshop with USDA Rural Development, resulting in four home loans for a total of \$103,650.00. The EC also partnered with the Leoti Housing Authority for a rehabilitation project of the community's low-income senior citizen housing facility, which received a \$100,000.00 low interest loan through USDA Rural Development's Multi-Family Housing Program for the project.

The Enterprise Community partnered with Unified School District 467 on several educational projects. For the second year, the school received an \$85,000.00 grant from Seaboard Farms to implement its 10-year technology plan. The EC provided \$12,500.00 in funds and solicited a private foundation grant of \$10,000.00 for the project. This money was matched with \$25,430.00 from the school district, all of which funded the purchase of 20 laptop computers for student check-out and a wireless mobile lab; installation of a T-1 line to all schools in the district and networking the schools together; educational software and 30 new computers for the high school; and rewiring the elementary school to handle the computer load. The EC also received a donation of 5 laptops and 1 printer for the school district from

the Farmers Home Administration. The EC and school district partnered for the second year with the Wichita County Arts Alliance to provide an elementary arts education program in the schools. They also received a private grant of \$4,888.00 for this project.

In the area of health care, the EC continues to partner with the Wichita County Health Center in its efforts to recruit a second doctor. The EC also assisted the health center in applying for a USDA Community Facilities loan/grant combination in the amount of \$121,110.00 for the purchase of new x-ray equipment. And the residents of the EC passed a \$2.1 million bond issue to renovate the Wichita County Health Center's long term care and upgrade electrical, mechanical and plumbing infrastructure at the facility. The community also received USDA Community Facilities loan/grant in the amount of \$149,379.00 for the purchase of a new fire truck to serve the EC. The EC also partnered with organizations to bring recreational and cultural arts activities to the residents. In partnership with the Wichita County Arts Alliance, several activities were conducted throughout the year, including a quilt show, jazz concert, Russian art exhibit, Art Explosion, and the elementary arts program mentioned previously. The EC also worked with the Wichita County Swim Team to purchase equipment needed to host swim events in the community, which resulted in their first swim competition with 203 regional competitors.

Two of the Wichita County Enterprise Community's Best Practices were the training of 17 EC residents in grant writing and conducting a Rural Resource Team assessment in the EC. A nine-day grant writing training course provided extensive training in the area of philanthropic giving and soliciting funding through private foundations. Seventeen resident representing 10 entities and organizations participated in the training, which the EC anticipates will produce a great return on its investment. A five-member Rural Resource Team spent three days in the EC, where they were given an extensive tour of the EC and conducted listening sessions with 11 different segments of the community. More than 200 residents of the EC participated in the listening sessions. A town hall meeting was held at the end of the three days where the Rural Resource Team made preliminary recommendations developed from the comments heard in the listening sessions. This will aid the residents of the EC in identifying the goals the community wants to achieve in the next five years. As a result of some of the EC's activities, the county valuation increased by \$5.3 million in 2001, from \$27,278,377.00 to \$32,608,916.00. This was the second year the county valuation had increased, for a total of an \$8 million increase. This was a direct result from business development activities of the EC. In addition, the school district enjoyed an increase of 19 students from the previous year. This is the first time in numerous years that the school district did not experience a decline in student enrollment.

The Wichita County Enterprise Community is looking forward to continued success in 2002. The EC has already conducted a three-day community foundation training and has formed a steering committee to establish a community foundation. The EC was successful in its application to be designated an Enterprise Facilitation pilot project with the six-county consortium, so this project will become a major focal point in the next year. As a result of the Rural Resource Team listening sessions, 30+ youth indicated an interest in working with the EC to develop some of their ideas in the next year also. The residents are also excited about the potential for wind energy development in the EC and will continue working in this area. Overall, Wichita County is excited about the success they enjoyed in 2001 and the potential for even greater success in 2002, and the positive impact that can be made through the EC program.