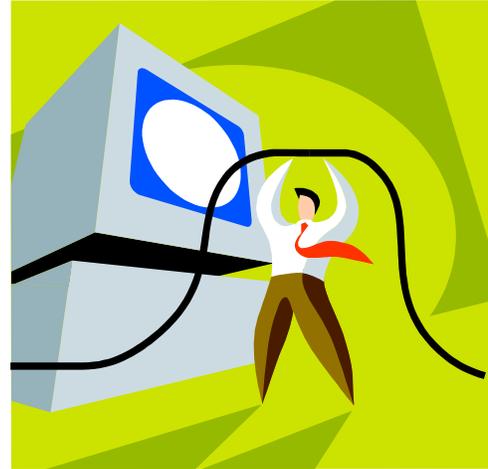
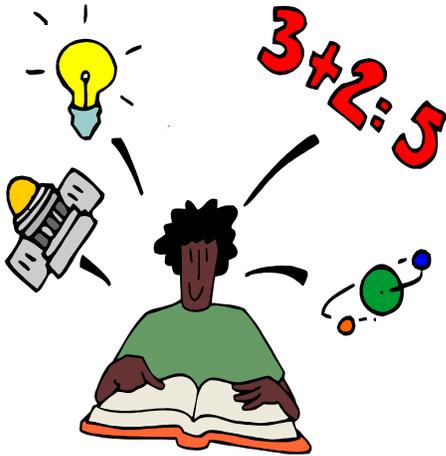
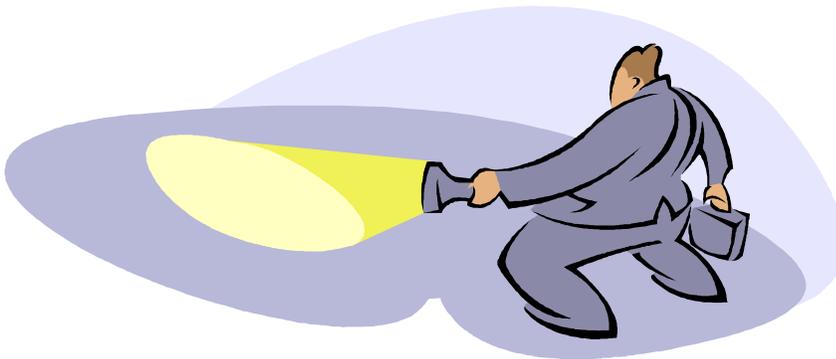


# Office of Community Development



## Best Practices 2002



RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## Best Practices 2002

*Best Practices* are methods or procedures of doing community development programs, processes, and projects that are exemplary and worth sharing with other communities. Usually, they are interesting ways of addressing some issue or challenge. Often, they are unique. Always, they are instructive. Most of the time, they can be shared with other communities, whose needs are similar enough that they can be taken as one possible way of addressing a similar issue.

OCD uses best practices for their instructive value. Believing that the best teacher is experience, OCD tries to find the most valuable practices that have been developed by rural communities and shares them in a form that can be understood and applied by other rural communities.

Each Best Practice includes:

- Name of the Community/National Center of Excellence
- Round I, II or III designation
- Brief statement of the issue or challenge the best practice addresses
- Brief description of process, program, or activity that addresses the issue
- Statement of why it should be considered a best practice (e.g., what is unique about it, what is especially effective, why the same practice could be used in other locations)
- Statement about special conditions under which the practice works best (e.g., an empowerment board structure that uses county sub-councils fits very well within an EZ that serves multiple counties and needs to assure adequate representation and local control to each)
- Results or consequences of using the best practice.
- Name, e-mail, phone and fax to contact the person for more information

### Categories of a Best Practice

- Administrative Capacity
- Sustainable Community Development
- Citizen Participation
- Financing the Strategic Plan
- Creating and Celebrating "Wins"
- Governance
- Leadership Development
- Monitoring and Evaluating Strategic Plans
- Community Based Partnership
- Managing Human Capital
- Other

Specify \_\_\_\_\_

An on line database has been created to allow you to enter and send your best practices directly to us. The address for this site is <http://www.ezec.gov/ezecforms/bestpractices.html>. If you have any questions please contact Artina Swilley of my staff at [aswilley@ocdx.usda.gov](mailto:aswilley@ocdx.usda.gov).

## *City of Deming, NM*

**Name of Community:** City of Deming

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Sustainable Community Development

**Challenge:** The lack of post-secondary educational resources in the community was an obstacle for many residents. Although two universities sit in neighboring communities 60 miles to the east and north of us, the lack of reliable transportation, and transportation in general in some cases, did not allow the broadest range of residents and those most in need to be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

**Best Practice:** Luna County, through the use of a combination of funds, established and opened the Mimbres Valley Learning Center (MVLC) in August of 2001. The MVLC is the first and only post-secondary institution in Luna County. The County was awarded a \$700,000 Economic Development Administration grant to purchase the building which previously housed the local K-Mart store. The building had sat vacant for a number of years. The building was then renovated and furnished with the help of a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant, a \$600,000 appropriation from the New Mexico legislature, \$225,000 in Enterprise Community funds, and local government matching funds. The MVLC offers both traditional and non-traditional courses as well as degree and non-degree programs. The County has partnered with our neighboring communities' institutions to provide these programs. They include Western New Mexico University (WNMU) out of Silver City to the north of us and the Dona Ana Branch Community College (DABCC) out of Las Cruces to the east of us. WNMU provides a Concurrent Enrollment program for local high school juniors and seniors meeting certain requirements. The program allows them to take up to six credit hours per semester for \$20 per course. The students earn both high school and college credit at the same time for a fraction of the regular cost of the courses. A secondary benefit that we have experienced with this project is the creation of some 30 new jobs. About 95% of the instructors for courses in both programs have been hired locally. The response from the community has been so overwhelming that the County just recently applied for and was awarded a \$400,000 Community Development Block Grant to add four more classrooms as well as more office space. The County was also awarded a Distance Learning grant to purchase the needed equipment and building to set up a distance learning site in the community of Columbus, which is situated 30 miles south of Deming on the U.S.-Mexico border. The MVLC is the training ground to empower the people in our community to move beyond the circumstances that currently exist in their lives. The positive effects will be felt for years to come.

**Background:** The State of New Mexico issued a moratorium on the establishment of community colleges in the state. The MVLC was a creative answer to provide residents access to post-secondary education without a community college. The establishment of the Center is the result of a series of partnerships and funding sources. The County worked with DABCC to branch their some of their existing programs into the community. The public school district had already been working with WNMU for a number of years to provide limited courses locally. This gave the MVLC a huge head start – not having to build a program from the ground up. The City and County each manage and maintain a portion of the MVLC. The educational side is managed and maintained by the County. The MVLC includes a Special Events Center which includes a large auditorium, wood dance floor, fully equipped commercial kitchen, and three breakout rooms for smaller conferences. The Special Events side is managed and maintained by the City. The City and County share the utility expenses at the site. This project utilizes existing services and a wealth of collaboration between local governments and educational institutions. Rural communities facing

the same obstacles could partner with neighboring universities to provide educational opportunities in their communities.

**Results:** The groundwork for the success of this project was laid over the course of about eight years. The local public schools were instrumental in bringing WNMU into the community. They arranged for WNMU to provide limited evening courses in one of the local public schools utilizing local teachers, and had continued that throughout these years. That situation set the groundwork and fueled a desire in the community for more extended course offerings because many students still had to travel 60 miles to the main campus for their upper level courses. Starting out on a small scale helped us to build some successes as well as to give us a good indication that the need and demand for these services did exist before moving on to building the Learning Center. This project required the support and cooperation of the local public school administration, the different educational institutions and some perseverance from local government to secure the needed funding. Having a supportive community and local government collaboration certainly did help as well.

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### ***City of Lock Haven Federal EC, PA***

**Name of Community:** City of Lock Haven

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Community Based Partnership

**Challenge:** It is a win-win situation at the Central Intermediate Unit #10 Development Center for Adults. Adults from the community can learn to read, improve their math skills or prepare for the GED high school equivalency diploma test. Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania student volunteers get experience in tutoring and an opportunity to build their confidence and teaching skills. This year students from Mountain Serve: Center for Rural Community Service and Learning at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania approached the Central Intermediate Unit #10 Development Center for Adults to develop a project for Lock Haven University students to tutor Clinton County Correctional Facility inmates. The project offers an opportunity for inmates who are on work release during the day to meet their educational goals in the evening.

**Best Practice:** The Central Intermediate Unit #10 provides services at the Clinton County prison in the mornings and afternoons five days a week for various programs. Seay states that inmates have complimented the program, "They really appreciate the individualized attention. With all the other personal issues an inmate is facing, the personal tutor allows them more time to address their individual needs."

Anne Marie Turnage, who is the Director of Community Service at Lock Haven University, stated that the project started with a student involved with the Youth Leadership Development Team, a component of the University's Americorps program that typically focuses on tutoring and mentoring local youth. When asked to consider a project, the student proposed tutoring adults in the prison. After a conversation with representatives at the Clinton County Correctional Facility

and the Central Intermediate Unit #10 Development Center for Adults, they identified a small population of inmates in the work release program who were not able to attend the daytime classes.

This year thirteen Lock Haven University students participated in the tutor training and orientation offered by the CIU #10 Development Center for Adults and the Clinton County Correctional Facility.

**Background:** It is a challenge, to hope that the volunteer will make the commitment to stay through the intensive and lengthy orientation and training.” In addition to recruiting students from Americorps as well as the general student body, Turnage put a call out to all faculty members for students to have this kind of experience. “It was an obvious fit for social work and criminal justice students. It has been particularly effective in linking a student’s academic work with their volunteer experience.”

Dr. Lucille Tabler, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, has involved her social work class in the project. Tabler states, “My students have learned that they are competent and caring individuals who can use their skills and training to make someone else’s life better. That realization is no small feat considering the challenges facing our global community today. From this experience they can truthfully say, ‘One person can make a difference.’ ” “The student volunteer tutors are an invaluable resource for our adult education programs,” says Ginny Seay, Volunteer Tutor Coordinator and Instructor. One of the most important sources of volunteers at the Central Intermediate Unit #10 Development Center for Adults is Lock Haven University. Each year approximately 30 students from the Literacy Corps class participate in the program and close to a hundred Lock Haven University Students from various programs will volunteer at the Center during the year. Students gain valuable knowledge about adult literacy that will be of benefit to them as they enter their chosen professions. Many of the Literacy Corps tutors volunteer more hours than the 40-hour requirement and many more continue to tutor throughout their college years and beyond.

**Results:** UNANSWERED

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**Name of Community:** City of Lock Haven

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Sustainable Community Development

**Challenge:** In order to respond to the need for accessibility to capital for small and start-up businesses, the City of Lock Haven, utilizing Enterprise Community funds, established a Commercial Revolving Loan Program. Many small businesses noted the difficulty in securing loans from the private sector markets. In many cases, local lenders will not take a risk on small or start-up businesses. As an alternative to private sector financing, this loan program was established and was expanded in 1997 with the assistance of a \$500,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

**Best Practice:** The Commercial Revolving Loan Program provides below market interest rate loans to small businesses to improve their facilities; for the expansion of existing businesses; and the start-up of new businesses in the City of Lock Haven. The term of the loan is usually three years for working capital, five years for machinery and equipment, and seven years for real estate. The maximum loan amount is \$50,000 or fifty (50%) percent of the total projects costs, whichever is less. For new construction and/or renovation projects, a \$5,000 deferred loan (grant), forgiven at a rate of 20% per year over 5 years, is also available in conjunction with the \$50,000 commercial loan. The use of loan funds must be related to the creation and/or retention of jobs. One full time job equivalent has to be created or retained for each \$10,000 of loan funds. Equity will normally be 10% of the total project cost, as determined in the financial analysis on a case by case basis.

The Lock Haven University Small Business Center provides technical assistance to any small business located in Lock Haven.

**Background:** Since 1997, the City has provided 12 loans totaling \$631,040 which generated \$1,368,316 in private investment and created or retained a total of 121 jobs.

**Results:** UNANSWERED

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**Name of Community:** City of Lock Haven

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Community Based Partnership

**Challenge:** Although a variety of recreational resources are available within Lock Haven and surrounding communities, the West Branch of the Susquehanna River clearly serves as the focus for recreational activities in the Lock Haven area. The paved river walk has rapidly become a favorite activity center for city residents of all ages and, in conjunction with the amphitheatre, offers a unique opportunity for the city to develop a wide array of programs that can reinforce recreation and economic development.

The 3,000 to 4,000 seat capacity amphitheatre is used extensively during the annual four day Labor Day Regatta celebration, but at other times during the year, the amphitheatre, for the most part, is underutilized. To augment the use of the amphitheatre, the City purchased a 40' x 20' floating stage in 1997; thus began the Lock Haven Summer Concert Series.

**Best Practice:** In 2002, the City of Lock Haven will be hosting a series of 23 concerts: 14 concerts at the J. Doyle Corman Amphitheater and Floating Stage and 9 concerts at Triangle Park, located in downtown Lock Haven. The summer concerts will feature a variety of musical offerings, such as dixie land, swing, classic rock, Top 40, gospel, and country music and would be geared toward a wide variety of age groups.

**Background:** Through the years, the Lock Haven Summer Concert Series has gained the support of many organizations throughout Clinton County. This year the City received \$13,818 in contributions in support of the 2002 Summer Concert Series, from agencies such as the Clinton

County Community Foundation, Clinton County, Lock Haven University, Clinton County Solid Waste Authority, and Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and. A local radio station, 92.1 The Mountain provides additional funding for the concert series.

**Results:** UNANSWERED

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**Name of Community:** City of Lock Haven

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Sustainable Community Development

**Challenge:** For just under 50 years, the City of Lock Haven was the home of the Piper Aircraft Corporation. Because of that relationship we have strong ties to aviation, and those ties are manifested in the William T. Piper Memorial Airport, which is owned and operated by the City. It is a General Aviation Airport, with a 3800 foot paved runway, lighting, hangars and t-hangars, and located within walking distance of the business district. The Piper Aviation Museum, located adjacent to the airport records the history of aviation in this area.

However, since Piper moved operations to Florida in 1983, there has been no serious use of the production side of the airport for manufacturing or business activities. The former Piper facilities are privately owned and unavailable for many uses.

The City is addressing the need for business development space in what we feel is an innovative way.

**Best Practice:** In 1998 the City began the process of developing a Business Park at the Airport. The Airport Business Park was designated a Keystone Opportunity Zone in 1999, which provides 12 years of tax free status to any developer locating in the KOZ. Utilizing U. S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Business Enterprise Grant funds, the City was able to complete a Phase I and Phase II Archaeological Investigation of the site, which revealed the location of two prehistoric sites. The City entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and USDA which restricts the usage of approximately 8 acres of the 24 acre business park site.

At the same time the archeological investigation was taking place, the City hired an engineering firm to develop a roadway and related infrastructure. Following input from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Aviation, the City finalized plans to locate the roadway along the southern border of the park, enabling the City to utilize the majority of the land for business development. The City anticipates bidding the roadway project in the summer of 2002.

**Background:** UNANSWERED

**Results:** UNANSWERED

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### *Clare County EC, MI*

**Name of Community:** Clare County Enterprise Community.

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Community Based Partnership

**Category Name:** UNANSWERED

**Challenge:** Rural Development does not have a local office located in the Clare EC. The specialist who serves Clare County also has outreach responsibilities in other counties. The challenge is to provide outreach and a local presence in Clare County to promote Rural Development's SFH program.

**Best Practice:** Rural Development works cooperatively with the Michigan State University Extension Service to assist potential low-income home buyers and people in need of home repairs. MSUE has an extension agent who seeks out potential applicants for home purchase or repair assistance. A housing specialist from Rural Development is provided office space at the EC office where she maintains regular office hours. The specialist also makes field visits to potential applicants identified by the extension agent.

**Background:** Having an extension agent doing outreach in the EC maximizes the productivity of the Rural Development housing specialist working in the county. When the specialist visits the county the extension agent already identified potential clients for her to meet. By having designated office hours in the EC, residents also know when they can meet with the housing specialist.

**Results:** This practice works well in the Clare County because of the involvement of MSUE as Executive Director of the EC.

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### *Desert Alliance Community EC, CA*

**Name of Community:** Desert Communities Empowerment Zone

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Sustainable Community Development

**Challenge:** Our Compadre Program's challenge is to provide information and assistance to minority small business operators concerning governmental permitting requirements in a manner that encourages trust and compliance, by bridging the communication and cultural gap that exists between the community and code enforcement agencies, and to overcome mistrust within the

community towards the agencies due to years and years of neglect and inconsistent and misleading dissemination of information.

**Best Practice:** Our Compadre Program is an innovative community-driven concept that uses neighbors helping neighbors to overcome barriers that exist within the community and government.

In Mexico, the term "Compadre" is used to describe the relationship between the parents of a young child and the person serving as the godfather of the child for a religious event such as a baptism, confirmation or wedding. The term literally means co-parent. The young child's family views a Compadre in very high regard. The Compadre serves in a mentoring capacity with the godchild, and bears the responsibility of assisting the godchild and the godchild's family in a time of need.

It is these qualities that led us to choose the term Compadre for this program. For the Compadre will serve as a mentor to those small business entrepreneurs who need assistance in complying with the permitting requirements of governmental agencies.

In the communities we serve there exist close to four hundred (400) unpermitted mobile home parks. The majority of these parks have been in operation for over ten (10) years. However, the owners and operators of these parks have neither obtained construction permits nor business permits from the local government to construct or operate their mobile home parks. In addition, the communities we serve also have several retail and other commercial small business enterprises that have operated for several years without the required permits. The majority of both groups of businesses are owned and operated by low-income Hispanic individuals; many are former farm workers who speak little or no English.

When the government recently began code enforcement activities, the communication and cultural barriers between the government and the community became apparent. These obstacles, combined with lack of information and general mistrust of the government, impeded the ability of the business operators to come forward to comply with the permitting requirements. The Compadre Program functions as an intermediary to bridge these obstacles.

The Compadre Program will reach out to the hundreds of mobile home park operators and other small business enterprises. The person we chose to serve as the "Compadre" is someone the community trusts and is bilingual. He will meet with the business owners on a one-on-one basis to provide them information concerning the permitting requirements as well as information on the several financial assistance programs that are available to them. The Compadre will answer any questions they may have concerning the requirements and the steps that need to be taken to come into compliance. The Compadre will work with the individuals to develop an action plan. The Compadre will be there to walk him or her through the process of obtaining the necessary permits.

USDA is supporting our Compadre Program through both its Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) and its Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG).

The Compadre Program has already experienced success. Recently the State identified twenty-six (26) mobile home park operators that were going to be referred to the District Attorney's office for prosecution because, according to the State, they were not taking action to come into compliance. Potentially, hundreds of families could have been displaced. Our Compadre Program, working closely with the State, was successful in encouraging these park operators to take action to come into compliance. Thus, avoiding the commencement of criminal proceedings against them that could have resulted in many families losing their homes.

**Background:** Our Compadre Program should be considered a best practice because it involves the unique component of the community working together to help one another in addressing governmental regulatory issues. This neighbor-helping-neighbor approach is effective because it involves the community serving to bridge the communication and cultural gaps that often exists between government and the community. Our Compadre Program can serve as a model for other communities because throughout the United States there exists similar issues and obstacles as those faced within the Desert Communities Empowerment Zone. The Compadre Program should be replicated in other communities to address very important community issues, such as those in our community -- that of encouraging the development of safe, decent and affordable housing, and encouraging economic development.

**Results:** For the Compadre Program to be successful someone must implement it from the community and someone whom the community trusts. The individual we hired to serve as the "Compadre" meets these criteria. Our Compadre has been involved as a leader on issues concerning mobile home parks since 1998 when he helped form the Social Justice Committee, a grassroots organization that was formed to promote the development of safe, decent and affordable housing for farm workers and other low-income families. In addition, our Compadre has experience as a small business operator in the community; he operated a tire-repair shop for several years. He therefore has first hand experience concerning the barriers the community must overcome in dealing with the government. Throughout these years our Compadre has earned the respect and trust of the community.

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### *East Central Arkansas EC, AR*

**Name of Community:** East Arkansas Enterprise Community

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Administrative Capacity

**Category Name:** Small Town Resource Center

**Challenge:** It was identified that a more active linkage between the small towns and the EC was needed – thereby, the establishment of the Small Town Resource Center.

**Best Practice:** The STRC collaborates with the small towns and cities, located in the EAEC, and assist them in seeking funding from other sources. The STRC plays a vital role in assisting these small town/cities in obtaining and submitting needed documents for funding.

**Background:** The STRC serves as the focal point for the small towns/cities. A lot of the mayors/county judges are not as schooled/skilled in seeking funding and/or proposal preparation. This is where the STRC bridges the gap between the applicant and the proposed funding entity. The ability to form working and on-going, collaborative partnerships. Our continuing partnership has proven to be invaluable. Information is shared with each other, this prevents duplication of services and efforts, therefore, and each organization are able to get maximum utilization of time.

**Results:** This best practice works best because when all partners are kept abreast of activities and meet to share information.

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**Name of Community:** East Arkansas Enterprise Community

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Administrative Capacity

**Category Name:** Leveraging Resources

**Challenge:** The EAEC has limited funds and the issue/task of leveraging resources is a challenge that has been adequately addressed. One of the best practices of the EAEC is its ability to collaborate with others and help leverage resources for community and economic development.

**Best Practice:** The EAEC programs have leveraged beyond expected rates, but the projects that have leveraged the most funds are the following examples: Lee County's Roads and Streets Project and PIP/CHED-ROC, Inc's Community / Recreational Center.

**Background:** The EAEC is an eagerly awaiting partner for entities seeking to help improve conditions for populations in the delta region.

**Results:** The best practice of leveraging resources continues to prove beneficial in the day-to-day operations. Public awareness of the EAEC's involvement in project funding has expanded beyond its jurisdictional boundaries. The Board and Staff procedures for handling inquiries, information, and timely responses have been paramount in administering the EAEC activities and one of the main factors in increasing partners, resources and potential partners with resources.

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**Name of Community:** East Arkansas Enterprise Community

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Administrative Capacity

**Category Name:** Outreach

**Challenge:** The EAEC recognized the need to provide health outreach services for the citizens of the EAEC.

**Best Practice:** The EAEC has formed a partnership with the White River Rural Health Centers, Inc. to assist in providing health outreach for the EAEC. White River has health clinics in various EC census tracts, which are accessible to the citizens of the EAEC to provide affordable health care services needed.

**Background:** The EAEC's Outreach Partnership is considered a Best Practice, because a majority of the citizens do not have access to affordable, quality health cares.

**Results:** This practice works best because it offers the clients the opportunity to no longer have to decide whether to pay their bills or to purchase their medications or to visit a physician – they can afford to meet both their personal and medical needs. This venture assists citizens in obtaining needed health and dental care, shelter, food, etc.... assistance that they need, but do not know how to or where to go to receive these needed services. People are getting assistance with doctor's and dentist's appointments, shelter for the homeless and drug-abuse treatment.

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### *Empowerment Alliance of SW FL EC*

**Name of Community:** Empowerment Alliance of SW Florida

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Sustainable Community Development

**Category Name:** and Citizen Participation

**Challenge:** The issues centered around our economic development program with two central questions: what training and skills are needed in the community by the existing businesses and what were the concerns and problems existing businesses had with expanding or growing their business in the community.

**Best Practice:** In order to get first hand knowledge of what the business needed we decided to conduct a Business Retention and Visitation Survey. This was conducted utilizing the expertise of the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Services Program to develop a survey instrument. A committee of local community leaders, along with students from the local high school received training and then conducted firm visits of the business in the community. The survey pinpointed business needs, concerns and development plans as well as training and skills needed for their workers. The survey was conducted in three rural counties (Glades, Hendry and Immokalee). The results of the survey were then categorized and a report written by the University, which outlined recommendations, based on the data and analysis of the survey responses. Presentations were made to governmental and civic groups and action plans were developed. Two subcommittees were formed to address the key issues from the survey: housing and education and training. The subcommittees are beginning the implantation process and have presented a plan to the School Board for vocational programs to address the needs of the business to begin in September 2002. The Housing Committee has developed a housing prochure to market new housing developments and implemented a housing counseling program to assist with individuals securing a mortgage for homeownership opportunities. The BREV study provided the necessary tool to involve the community and form the partnerships we needed, as well as the data to implement programs that were needed in the community.

**Background:** This program is easily duplicated in other areas. A Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program is locally based program utilizing local volunteers to survey existing businesses in order to provide the community with comprehensive information that can be used by business leaders, local and state governments, community leaders and other local groups to identify and adopt a site specific economic development strategic plan.

**Results:** The BR&E Visitation program was conducted in a three county area by the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, in conjunction with local economic development councils, Chambers of Commerce and the Empowerment Alliance of Southwest Florida. This collaborative approach worked very well and also worked from a marketing perspective of the whole rural area.

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### *Fayette EC, PA*

**Name of Community:** Fayette Enterprise Community – Round II EC

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Improve emergency equipment and reduce emergency response time

**Challenge:** This practice has impacted the community in so many ways that it is hard to identify them all in such a short letter, but we have highlighted some of the most important areas. This program serves as a Best Practice to the Federal Enterprise Community due to having community-based defibrillators and trained personnel in the Federal Enterprise Community of Fayette County, PA.

In Fayette County, Pennsylvania, 1998 records found that the median time to arrival of advanced cardiac care for victims of sudden cardiac death was 4 minutes after dispatch in urban areas, and 8 ½ minutes in rural areas. The outcome for individuals waiting for these prolonged times for defibrillation can be expected to be poor. Current studies have proven that the new lifesaving technology of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) will dramatically decrease mortality, due to sudden cardiac arrest, as defibrillation is the only effective treatment for the fatal cardiac rhythm; ventricular fibrillation. Simply, the challenge the Fayette County EMS Council faced was to increase survival from out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrest in adults by providing grass roots, community-based early defibrillation. (1, 2, 3)

Cardiovascular disease is the largest cause of death and disability in the United States today. Fortunately, over the last 20 years, the rate of death and disability from nearly all forms of cardiovascular disease has decreased. Yet, there remain approximately 500,000 deaths due to coronary disease each year. Approximately 360,000 of these are the result of sudden cardiac death. Unfortunately, the rate of sudden cardiac death has remained unchanged during this same 20-year period.

Sudden cardiac death is usually due to the sudden onset of a cardiac rhythm, quite often in a previously healthy individual. This rhythm is frequently the result of ventricular tachycardia or ventricular fibrillation. These rhythms are almost always fatal unless converted to a perfuming

rhythm (one with a pulse) in a very short period of time. The chance of survival, then, is measured in minutes and is quite dependent on the timeliness in the arrival of advanced cardiac care or early defibrillation. Simply, the speed in which defibrillation is administered is in direct correlation to one's chance of surviving a sudden cardiac death episode. Research has proven that each minute that defibrillation is delayed, the victim's chance for survival decreases by up to 10 percent.

**Best Practice:** In the spring of 2000, the Fayette County EMS Council initiated a 5-year project designed to place an AED within every five square mile area of the county. Two areas of the county were listed as priority locations for AED placement. This included the eastern mountain areas where established extended EMS response times of ten minutes or more is not uncommon. The second area receiving a high priority designation was the populated, and economically depressed, Federal Enterprise Communities (FEC). The FEC was considered not only because of the population centers of Connellsville and Uniontown, but also because significant funding to purchase the units and deliver training activities was in place.

The implementation process included the identification of Immediate Response Personnel (IRP's) in the public safety sector, which were willing to participate in the program and complete the required eight hours of training. The project required that AED responders must complete 4 hours of initial CPR training (Heartsaver CPR) as well as four hours of AED training (Heartsaver AED). Of the available IRP personnel, police officers received top billing for placement, because of their patrol activities at which they often arrive at the scene of a medical emergency a few minutes ahead of other emergency responders. Since IRPs are currently functioning in areas where there has been an identified need to enhance emergency medical response time; placement of an AED at these locations makes sense as our first focus of attention. As these units are brought on line, other fire services and police departments are contacted on a priority basis, which place units at locations of identified need.

**Results:** The system was created not by an individual effort, but by a teamwork approach that included many partners including the Fayette County Emergency Medical Services Council, Fayette-Penn Economic Development Council, Highlands Hospital, Brownsville Hospital, Uniontown Hospital, and the municipalities of Connellsville, Uniontown, Dunbar Township, Redstone Township, and Menellen Township. This partnership placed within the FEC, 22 AED's, at 14 locations, with over 200 individuals completing AED and CPR training. One save has been documented, and the system is in place and functioning to a level that will guarantee that additional lives we be saved in the future.

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**Name of Community:** Fayette Enterprise Community – Round II EC

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Insure that all residents have access to health care services

**Challenge:** Fayette County is federally designated as a medically underserved area for disadvantaged low-income, elderly and disabled individuals. Responding to this problem, in 1997, Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc. (FCCAA) launched Community Action Medical Services to provide affordable, comprehensive health care and preventive health services to medically underserved individuals. Additionally, Community Action Medical Services was developed to address the problems of high rates of poverty as well as the lack of health insurance for residents in an effort to ensure all Fayette County residents would have access to quality health care.

Seventy percent of the Community Action Medical Services current patient roster is either without health insurance or utilize Medicaid. Community Action Medical Services offers a reduced fee for patients without health insurance, accepts Medicare and Medicaid, as well as all major health insurance plans. Community Action Medical Services is staffed by a full-time board-certified physician, two retired prominent local physicians who specialize in family and pediatric medicine and a physician assistant. Community Action Medical Services also staffs an office manager/ billing specialist, two medical assistants and a receptionist.

**Best Practice:** Since its inception, Community Action Medical Services has served more than 3,300 residents in various stages of need: infants in need of immunizations; teenagers in transition to adulthood; young mothers in need of prenatal services; newly unemployed individuals without health insurance for their families; the elderly unable to afford timely health care; low-income, uninsured, and underinsured families and individuals. The patient roster has more than doubled in the last two years alone. During last fiscal year, Community Action Medical Services recorded a total of 4,107 visits at its Uniontown location and 247 at its Brownsville location.

Community Action Medical Services continues to serve the community at large by hosting Head Start physicals, flu shot clinics, diabetes education clinics and WIC staff training's. The clinical team works with the Pennsylvania Department of Health with its sponsored flu shot clinics in addition to working at its Fayette County STD clinic. Community Action Medical Services work has been recognized by both the Fayette County Medical Society and the Pennsylvania Medical Society which recently awarded us with a grant.

Community Action Medical Services will soon be adding a small eye-care clinic to its practice. The clinic is being developed by donated equipment from a local optometrist along with funding from a foundation.

In an effort to meet the needs of more low-income medically underserved individuals, in January 2002, Community Action Medical Services applied to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to secure funding in the amount of \$650,000 over a two-year period for an expansion project. The amount requested in the grant proposal will allow for expansion at Community Action Medical Services existing two sites in Uniontown and Brownsville and add a third location in Henry Clay Township which will serve portions of both Fayette and Somerset counties. With the funding,

all three sites will not only offer quality medical care to consumers but dental care and mental health services as well.

**Background:** Community Action Medical Services should be considered as a best practice for 2002 because of its commitment to taking an active leadership role in the development, delivery, accessibility and advocacy of primary health care while improving the health and well-being of the individuals in the community it serves. Community Action Medical Services works best by finding new funding streams to expand its current services and add additional services to meet the growing needs of the Fayette County population.

In September 2001, FCCAA and Community Action Medical Services opened a dental office on the fourth floor of the FCCAA Family Service Center. FCCAA received the start-up monies for the dental clinic through a Primary Care Challenge Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health after Fayette County was designated a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (DHPSA) for low-income residents. Additional start-up monies were leveraged through a grant award from the Eden Hall Foundation. A full-time dentist, a dental hygienist and dental assistant staff the dental clinic along with a receptionist.

Also in the fall of 2001, FCCAA and Community Medical Services launched the Fayette County Nurse-Family Partnership Program. The Nurse-Family Partnership is a national program coordinated through the National Center for Children and Families at the University of Colorado that is funded in Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. A master's level nurse supervisor oversees five registered nurses that are each assigned caseload of 25 first-time mothers. Mothers who enroll in the program will be visited in their homes by a trained registered nurse. The visits will begin at 14-28 weeks of gestation and continue until the child is two years old. The nurse home visitor will focus on a mother's personal health and development, environmental health and the quality of care giving for the child. The nurse home visitor will involve family members and friends that are in the support system of the mother and child while encouraging them to utilize various community health and human services when needed.

**Results:** Community Action Medical Services is a nonprofit community health center that provides family based, comprehensive primary health care and preventive health services. Community Action Medical Services is committed to the delivery of the highest quality health care services to its at-risk population. Community Action Medical Services full-time headquarters is located in an Enterprise Community at the FCCAA Family Service Center in Uniontown and its part-time office location in Brownsville borders the Enterprise Community.

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**Name of Community:** Fayette Enterprise Community – Round II EC

**Type of Designation:** EZEC Best Practice Category: Other

**Category Name:** Provide public community facilities and family service centers

**Challenge:** A hallmark development in a Federal Enterprise Community of Fayette County is the Campus of Services located in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCCAA) has developed the Campus of Services over the past fifteen years and revitalized

a deteriorating portion of downtown Uniontown in an Enterprise Community by renovating longtime existing buildings and developing new buildings on the Campus of Services.

**Best Practice:** Unique to the project is the variety of funding sources for the community development projects on the Campus of Services which total more than \$12 million. FCCAA has been able to leverage the funds through Pennsylvania companies' tax credit programs, federal loan programs, foundations and private financing. The Campus of Services features approximately 60,000 square feet of office space in addition to 30,000 square feet of warehouse space and 60 apartment units.

The newest addition to the Campus of Services is Meadow Heights Apartments which opened in 2002. Meadow Heights Apartments is a 60-unit senior living facility for low-to-moderate residents age 62 and older. Meadow Heights is unique to Fayette County in that it will not only offer affordable housing but optional supportive services on an as needed basis. Not only are support services available to the residents but the entire Campus of Services as well which includes access to medical and dental care as well as housing and food assistance programs at the Family Service Center. The residents of Meadow Heights will also benefit from the FCCAA Uniontown Senior Citizens Center located in the Community Service Center.

**Background:** The Campus of Services is a Best Practice in its Enterprise Community because it redeveloped a deteriorating portion of Uniontown and turned it into a comprehensive location for health and human services for the residents of Fayette County.

The FCCAA Food Bank and Warehouse is the Fayette County warehouse for the collection and storage of food for disadvantaged residents. The Family Service Center, which opened in 1998, is a state-of-the art facility which provides a multitude of services for the residents of our community including: education, Women, Infants & Children (WIC), housing, case management, information and referral, the children's safe parenting center, Community Action Medical Services and Dental Services and nine health and human service tenants including an office of U.S. Congressman Frank Mascara. The Family Service Center also features shared meeting rooms for FCCAA and its tenants as well as access to the latest computer technology through a technology center.

**Results:** The Campus of Services includes the Community Service Center, the Food Bank and Warehouse, the Family Service Center and Meadow Heights apartments. The Community Service Center was renovated and opened in 1990 by FCCAA. It currently houses the FCCAA Uniontown Senior Citizens Center, along with eight human service tenants.

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**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Provide safe, educational and recreational youth facilities in all communities.

**Challenge:** As of the 1990 Census, figures reveal the following conditions for the township and surrounding areas:

1. 41.38% population is defined at the poverty level.
2. The average per capita income of the population is \$9,120; state per capita income average is \$14,068.
3. Median housing value is \$27,711; state median housing value is \$69,075.

There is a limited tax base in Redstone Township with fewer than five commercial enterprise employing more than 12 persons.

**Best Practice:** There are no recreational facilities, public or private in Redstone Township or the surrounding communities, serving a population of 6,400 and approximately 500 of those being children between the ages of 1 and 17.

On November 16, 2000, the Redstone Recreation Center held its grand opening. The center now complete hosts basketball leagues and practices, has exercise equipment and hosts many other activities and is self-sustaining from the rentals. In the future it is hopeful that adult aerobics, martial art classes and possibly other activities can be hosted at the facility.

**Background:** This Best Practice has a positive impact in the community by providing the Fayette Enterprise Community a safe, educational and recreational youth facility in the Redstone Township area. As the need for adequate recreational facilities were identified and it became apparent of the need for such a center in the area, the idea was born to develop a Redstone Recreation Center in the Federal Enterprise Community of Fayette County, PA.

In true community spirit, the center no longer has any debt and is adorned with plaques and tales recognizing the people who made the center a reality.

**Results:** The Supervisors and members of a recreational committee wanted to begin the process of building a recreational facility within the boundaries of Redstone. It was decided to be located in Republic, which makes it centrally located. The work began when the Board had a public meeting to get a response from the community. The response was tremendous. With private donations totaling over \$103,000.00 to date and a number of in-kind contributions, combined with public funds, revenue from fundraisers and anticipated rental income, the center seemed on its way to becoming a reality.

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**Name of Community:** Fayette Enterprise Community – Round II EC

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Develop and maintain an adequate public transportation system available to all resident

**Challenge:** In 1996, Benetec and Associates completed a transit study for the County of Fayette. The recommendations cited in this report became the strategic plan to take transportation services in

Fayette County to the next level.

Since 1983, Fayette County has operated Shared-Ride and Medical Assistance Transportation Program services. The Shared-Ride Program although open to the general public is subsidized 85% for persons 65 years of age or older. However, this program is not cost effective for the general public to use on a regular basis without being subsidized by a sponsoring agency. The medical Assistance Transportation Program is open to any resident that qualifies for medical assistance through the Department of Public Welfare. Limited Human Services Development Funds are available for clients meeting income eligibility criteria.

Transportation is available through para-transit program countywide. Most of these services are sub-contracted to private transportation operators who are provided with zone assignments to determine their area of operation.

**Best Practice:** The Shared-Ride program has become the base for coordination of the para-transit services available in Fayette County. For the last three years, Fayette County added the Welfare to Work transportation program to the coordination process. All of these programs are coordinated together in one system through a central reservation and coordinated process.

In August 2000, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation granted Fayette County Rural Fixed Route Demonstration Status and provided funding for the implementation 5 new public bus routes, and the enhancement of 1 existing bus route. Over the last 18 months, Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation has reviewed and adjusted these routes to accommodate suggestions and requests of the public, and to meet the criteria set forth by the Department as a goal to demonstrate the viability of the service for possible continuation funding under the Rural Operating Assistance Program.

The Goals set by the Department include 6 passengers per hour, and 30% cost recovery. Currently, the fixed route system is operating at 4.8 passengers per hour and is at 22% cost recovery. These figures compare well to other transit operator across the Commonwealth as reported in the Pennsylvania Operating Assistance Program – Statistical Report for Rural and Small Urban Programs.

**Background:** The implementation of fixed route system in Fayette County has enabled the general public to access services and businesses by public transit at a minimal cost to them. The average one-way fare is \$1.50. Monthly passes are also offered at additional discounts. The addition of the public bus routes has resulted in an increase in the freedom of mobility for all residents of the county.

Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation has contracted with Greyhound to staff the local Greyhound station to offer ticket sales and information. This location services as the hub for the fixed bus routes as well.

Transportation Information Specialists have the ability to coordinate transportation for passengers by referring them to the most appropriate mode of transportation based on their eligibility for subsidized programs, and can also coordinate between different modes of transportation where the situation warrants. One such instance could be the resident that lives in a rural area of the county can use the para-transit service as a shuttle to access the fixed route system.

**Results:** Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation is pleased with the progress transportation services have made since 1996. With the assistance of the Fayette County Transportation Coalition

and the Fayette County Transportation Executive Committee, Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation continues to research funding options to garner additional program funding for it's para-transit operation, and to review and adjust existing public bus routes to ensure the goals set by the Department and needs of the residents of Fayette County are met.

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**Name of Community:** Fayette Enterprise Community – Round II EC

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Preserve and develop the area's historic, tourism, recreational and cultural resources

**Challenge:** The State Theater Center for the Arts offers a variety of cultural, professional entertainment that the people of Fayette County would otherwise not have. On an annual basis a diverse variety of entertainment venues are brought to the State Theatre in Uniontown. Because of issues of economic viability most Fayette County residents cannot afford to travel to the city to see a professional play, dance company, symphony or musical. The State Theater brings all of these to the people of Fayette County at a very reasonable cost enabling children and senior citizens the opportunity to experience theater at its best.

**Best Practice:** The State Theater continues to better the experience by continuing renovations on an ongoing basis. So far we have installed a HVAC system, upgraded our electrical system especially with light and sound, installed new seats on the main floor, mezzanine and balcony loge, installed new carpeting and new stage curtains, and renovated the main lobby area.

The State Theater offers discount tickets to children and senior citizens. Also offered is an education series that brings thousands of students to the theater on an annual basis at a low cost of \$2 per student. This enables Fayette County children who otherwise would never see the inside of a theater to attend a professional performance.

**Background:** The State Theater Center for the Arts is a best practice because it embodies the true meaning of "community." The theater is also utilized for local high school musicals, dance recitals, presentations, and fundraising functions that benefit the entire area. We also offer tours and there are many people who stop in on a daily basis and ask, "can we just go into the theater and look? We graduated from high school in this theater!" There are a lot of local citizens who saw their first movie here or worked here as an usher as a teenager. The stories just go on and on and we certainly enjoy listening. The State Theater is a great asset to the economic vitality of Fayette's county seat.

**Results:** While providing cultural and entertainment opportunities to our residents, we are contributing to the overall enhancement of the region's quality of life.

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## ***FUTURO EC, TX***

**Name of Community:** FUTURO Communities, Inc.

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Sustainable Community Development

**Challenge:** 1. Rural communities often lack the resources and knowledge to create an effective marketing plan and materials for the purpose of recruiting businesses to their region. 2. Community organizations do not often work together as a group to implement an economic development marketing plan. 3. Generating electronic marketing materials typically requires paying experts a premium. How do you save money creating state-of-the-art marketing materials while also developing an educational program that can be used for further economic development?

**Best Practice:** Through a partnership with the City of Uvalde, County of Uvalde, FUTURO Communities, Inc., Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) and the Uvalde Area Development Foundation (UADF), economic development is becoming an important topic and goal for the Uvalde, Texas area again. UADF is in the process of implementing a marketing plan that it wrote in the latter part of 2001. The goal of the plan is to bring numerous organizations and people together in an effort to improve overall economic development and to recruit businesses from outside the region. In addition, a program through one of the local colleges, SWTJC, will be developed to train area residents and students on new technology that can be utilized to further economic development and learn new job skills.

The 2002 Economic Development Plan is a plan that will help in the creation of marketing materials that promote the Uvalde area and Empowerment Zone. In addition to creating marketing tools, the plan also calls for implementation. More specifically, after the marketing materials are finalized, UADF, in conjunction with local residents and organizations, will become active in recruiting businesses that are good candidates for expanding their business to the Uvalde area. UADF will manage the project and SWTJC, utilizing all of its resources, will carry out the day-to-day tasks with the assistance of others in the community.

The expected cost of the project is approximately \$60,000. A local business owner with a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) is the project coordinator. The final products/outcomes will include: a community profile; a quick facts report; new web sites for UADF, the Uvalde Chamber of Commerce, the City of Uvalde and Uvalde.com; an interactive compact disk (CD) that contains a marketing video and links to Uvalde information; a list of over 4,000 companies outside the state of Texas that are ideal candidates for expanding to the Uvalde area; a mass mail campaign to approximately 1,000 companies; economic development articles in the local newspaper; relationship building with prospective companies and regional economic development organizations; and the design and implementation of a video development course at Southwest Texas Junior College.

All marketing materials have been, or will be, developed locally, including the design of the web sites. In order to create the electronic marketing materials, SWTJC and its electronic media department worked closely with the lead coordinator and UADF. So that the proper tools

necessary to make the best marketing piece possible would be available, the college upgraded its system and purchased new software. A group of three individuals learned the new equipment and software and will develop a course to teach others how to utilize the technology. This will allow an opportunity for businesses and non-profit organizations to better markets their own organization or business.

**Background:** The economic development efforts of UADF, FUTURO, local business people, SWTJC, and other partner organizations have successfully energized the community about economic development again. More importantly, it has combined the resources of both government and business organizations in order to create marketing materials and economic development knowledge that will be utilized for years to come.

This marketing effort can be duplicated as long as a community has adequate technology and a desire to work together.

**Results:** Developing a partnership with all area organizations interested in economic development is the only way a proactive plan can be implemented. Otherwise, there seems to be duplication of efforts and/or a lack of adequate resources.

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**Name of Community:** FUTURO Communities, Inc.

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Technology and Small Business Development

**Challenge:** 1. Rural, small businesses want to sell their goods over the Internet but do not know how to begin. 2. Adequate, in-depth training for small businesses is not readily available in rural communities, especially training that focuses on e-commerce. 3. Rural communities want to bring in sales dollars from outside the region but need businesses to be able to market their goods and services successfully.

**Best Practice:** Thanks to the Ford Foundation, its Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC), and assistance from FUTURO Communities, Inc., five South Texas businesses are growing their business by selling their products over the Internet.

This is an opportunity made possible through a hands-on e-commerce program called the Southwest Texas E-Commerce Business Incubator (STEBI). The goal for STEBI was to take five local businesses and help them sell their products outside the South Texas region and, ultimately, bring in new revenue streams for the businesses and local economy. Until STEBI was started, there had never been this type of economic development program in Southwest Texas.

The selected participants represented a diverse group of people and businesses, including a cowboy hat renovation service, pecan farm, religious art site, Mexican food distributor and RV park. The six-month program was not about just web site creation, it was about developing good business

practices for a business. Participants learned how to research their customer and market, understand their product, develop good operational procedures, determine effective advertising plans, become knowledgeable about business on the internet, manage marketing information, and much more.

After the completion of a business plan, each business was given up to \$3,000 for their advertising campaign. Not only did this allow businesses to implement their plans, but it also allowed them to experiment with different forms of advertising so that they could determine what was effective. For example, the hat renovation company, Codyshatshop.com, advertised in an upscale cowboy magazine (Cowboys and Indians), a regional newspaper (Sheridan Press) and on a Sheridan country and western radio station. (Research showed that Sheridan, Wyoming was the perfect market for their business.) The business also conducted Internet marketing and mailed a marketing piece to a small number of existing customers. They found that the magazine and the newspaper/radio combination were the most successful for their business.

The participants completed their class work and launched their web sites and advertising campaigns in August, 2001. The project cost approximately \$45,000 but is expected to bring in \$70,000 - \$100,000 directly into the community within twelve months. After only three months of launching their advertising campaigns, sales for all the businesses increased by over \$46,000. In addition, there is the immeasurable value of education and experience that each business owner gained. Because of the success of the initial program, the Junior College and FUTURO are preparing to start a second program in July of 2002.

**Background:** The STEBI program will successfully help at least ten business owners and managers in southwest, rural Texas who have limited resources but have a product or service to sell to other areas of the United States via the Internet. STEBI accomplishes this by providing the owners and managers with entrepreneurial training, technical assistance, and limited, physical and financial resources. Ultimately, the incubator facilitates business and economic growth in the Southwest Texas region.

There are two primary reasons STEBI is successful. One, participants are guided by a personal consultant and are not just taught theory in a classroom. Two, providing marketing dollars to participants is not only an incentive to keep participants motivated, it also allows them to receive guidance all the way through implementation.

A business plan for the STEBI program has been written and can be easily revised and implemented in other parts of the country.

**Results:** The STEBI team determined in the beginning that the program would work best for existing businesses. If participants do not have proven and established business practices, they not only have to learn how to conduct a business over the Internet, they have to learn how to start a business from the ground up as well. Allowing participants who only have a business idea to participate can be achieved, but should be done in a program that is more intense and focused on businesses in the start-up phase.

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**Name of Community:** FUTURO Communities, Inc.

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Administrative Capacity

**Challenge:** Before the Community Technology Center program implemented in the FUTURO region, the region had limited access to technology through workforce programs and schools that provided computer labs during the working and school hours. The doors were not open during the after-school and evening hours, thereby resulting in limited access to residents both adults and the youth of the region.

**Best Practice:** As an organization that has been existence for 2 1/2 years with ties to organizations that have been part of the Middle Rio Grande Region for more than 20 years, FUTURO Communities, Inc. offers a continued effort of talent and coordination of services geared at serving the population especially the youth in this border region of Texas. FUTURO is currently in its third year of operation in the Community Technology Centers Program, funded through the U.S. Department of Education. The CTC program provides a variety of services ranging from after school activities, pre-school Saturday programs to business development by capitalizing on the technological infrastructure development by capitalizing on the technological infrastructure development that has been achieved through the SWTNet and Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) and partnerships with the Middle Rio Grande Workforce and independent school districts in the region. At the present time, the centers are open from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and Saturday morning from 9:00 a.m. to Noon. The communities are allowed access to job banks, job searches, and student research, and to specialized software through the CTC/Workforce centers and school districts. Computer literacy classes instructed by certified instructors are offered by semester to the communities along with small business development seminars. A successful method that the CTC program has established as a best practice is the Saturday Pre-School Reading and Activity Program. The five CTCs have connected through video conferencing on Saturdays hosted by one particular CTC site. The other CTCs participate in the same activities whether it include reading material, coloring material, arts and crafts and/or special presentations and any other subject that is spearheaded by the host center. Children from the region that participate learn and have fun together while viewing neighboring participants on the video equipment.

**Background:** The Saturday Pre-School program is very unique has become effective for the children who participate. Their regional participation of the children by reading stories via interactive video conferencing affords them the opportunity to integrate technology by researching the author of the book. An example of integrating technology will be an upcoming Saturday program, in which the centers will be receiving a shipment of the book titled "Grandma Jus Come" by Ana Sisnet. In Ana Sisnet's book, her focus is on childhood memoirs of her and her grandmother who was from Jamaica. The objective being the implementation of technological integration in the children's lives that will enable them to research other cultures in the hope that it stimulates and nurtures a desire for creative writing that embellishes their own memoirs.

**Results:** The combination of creative writing and technological integration provides the children in our region the opportunity to express ideas, develop strong educational foundations and expands their knowledge of technology. Therefore, allowing children to experience writing and possibly publishing their work.

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## *Josephine County EC, OR*

**Name of Community:** Josephine County “Sunny Wolf Family Coalition”

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Community Based Partnership

**Challenge:** How to provide integrated health and social services to a rural, isolated, economically distressed population in Southern Oregon. Wolf Creek is a small rural community located in the Southwest corner of Oregon between two mountain passes. It is considered one of the poorest communities in the Pacific Northwest. Unemployment is more than double the state average, and per capita income is three-fifths the state average. Many families still live in homes without indoor plumbing or electricity. Eighty-six to 98% of the community's children qualify for USDA free or reduced priced meals. The incidence of substance abuse and family violence is a significant concern. In addition to being poor, families have tended to be transient and isolated from one another and the closest town is Grants Pass.

**Best Practice:** The Sunny Wolf Family Coalition (SWFC) is a 34 member collaborative of federal, state and county agencies working with local private non-profits to deliver service in the northern segment of the Josephine County Rural Enterprise Community. The SWFC is an Oregon Department of Human Services Integrated Social Services Site and its "one stop" shop approach allows for all services to be centralized, integrated, flexible, community-based and family centered. Communication across the 34 member agencies work well, and services are integrated for each family who receives them. In community wide efforts, the members of the Coalition work together from a single, annual work plan, allowing the weaving of resources to create seamless supports for children and their families.

**Background:** The community of Wolf Creek, Oregon was recently selected as one of five communities nationwide, that was providing a model of service delivery for children and their families. This designation as a "Community of Excellence" was determined after an exhaustive study was conducted for Communities Can! and the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council by the Georgetown University Child Development Center. We are currently being featured in a publication of "Communities Can!" as well as by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. One of the major partners in our collaborative is the Oregon Parent Center which is a partnership between the Northeast Portland Enterprise Community through the Albina Headstart program and the Josephine County Rural Enterprise Community, through the SWFC.

One of our most unique practices is the single annual work plan that is developed and implemented by the 34 agency collaborative. Most of all, our programs are "grass roots" in addressing the needs and concerns of our community. All of our programs are "participant driven" and thrive based on community volunteers. As a community we have a rich history of collaboration and a partnership that makes our programs succeed.

**Results:** Our practice works best in a condition where the various agencies and the community they serve participate fully as equal partners. Cooperation and participation by various levels of government-State, County and Enterprise Community increase and enhance the ability to "reinvent" how government delivers services in rural America.

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## ***Missouri State Office, MO***

**Name of Community:** Missouri State Office, USDA Rural Development

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Communications, Program Outreach and Technical Assistance

**Challenge:** We continually have a need to communicate information, whether it is about programs, funding, special initiatives, meetings, regulation changes, etc., to individuals, organizations, partners, communities and others. Our challenge was to find a way to disseminate the information in the most timely, efficient, effective manner at the least cost in employee labor and actual dollar costs.

We continually have a need to communicate information, whether it is about programs, funding, special initiatives, meetings, regulation changes, etc., to individuals, organizations, partners, communities and others. Our challenge was to find a way to disseminate the information in the most timely, efficient, effective manner at the least cost in employee labor and actual dollar costs.

**Best Practice:** We basically addressed this challenge with development of two tools. The first is a "Building Communities" newsletter that we publish quarterly. This newsletter contains a variety of information about RD programs, events, success stories, fund availability, regulation changes, coordinated partner efforts/information, special initiatives, etc. We do 1 sheet of paper (front and back), easy to carry and handout and quick to read. We also keep the latest version on our state web site (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo/bc21502pg1.htm>). The second tool we developed helped us address how to distribute the information. We developed a database that contains the name, address, phone numbers and email address (when available) of potential recipients. This allows us to email the newsletter when available and saves the labor and cost of printing and mailing, as well as being timelier. The database currently contains the following categories of recipients: Chambers of Commerce, County Officials (Presiding Commissioners, Clerks, etc.), Banks (Partner Banks, Guaranteed Lenders, etc.), Federal Legislators, State Legislators, Electric Cooperatives, City Officials (Mayors), Newspapers, Telephone Cooperatives, Economic Developers, Partners (Federal and State, both regional and state-wide), other RD employees (State Directors, OCD staff in National Office, Community Development Staff and others. Each record is identified by a "type" code that groups certain entities together, i.e. Legislators, Mayors, Chambers of Commerce, Media, etc. We also identify each record with the RD State Office, by RD Area Office and by RD local office that services the area where that entry is located. Word documents can be set up to merge with the name and address information in the database and offices can print out mailing labels should they have a need. A query can be written to define specific offices or specific groups if you have information that is related only to a specific office or specific recipient group. As an example, if you have something that is going only to the legislators, a query can be written and you would have one email address that would send that information to all legislators in the database. Likewise, if you learn of a new foundation or grant whose purpose is to assist in financing emergency sirens, you could query the database for Cities and Counties and notification would be sent out only to those entities. Currently we have 1300+ entries in our database but the information reaches beyond this number. As expected, email is not available for everyone. We have about 300 of the 1300

without email addresses that we mail by hard copy but this number continues to decrease. In some cases, we will have an email address for an individual who serves as a conduit by forwarding the information to others in their system, i.e. University of Missouri Outreach and Extension, Department of Economic Development, Missouri Independent Bankers, etc. This expands our outreach by hundreds more than our actual entries. We have 114 counties in Missouri with well over 900 communities. Information we send out reaches all counties and all communities and more than likely, multiple individuals or organizations in the same location. Since the beginning of this project, we are continually finding more and more uses for sharing information using our database, i.e. NOFA's, press releases, notices of events/meetings, grant availability of other partners or foundations, etc. The list goes on and on.

**Background:** This started out as a small project to reach a few people with a newsletter. It has grown to be a tool that can reach statewide at almost a push of the button or can quickly be dissected to reach a specific group for a variety of reasons. We are continually updating the database with new entries that have heard about our information sharing from someone else. Every time we have sent something out it has generated a large number of responses. It is a great method to promote RD programs. Our State Director utilizes the newsletter as an outreach tool and carries them as a handout as he travels across the state. Our partners have learned of our database and have requested assistance from us for specific lists of individuals that they need. The feedback on the newsletter and database (receiving information electronically) has been anywhere from just "thank you" for making us aware of this opportunity, to asking for more details. Bottom line, it reaches a lot of people in a timely fashion at minimal cost.

**Results:** Communication and limited resources play a part in any organization, agency, community, etc. so this practice can fit most situations. You will always have some without electronic access but there are ways to still make the system work.

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### ***Okefenokee Empowerment Board CC, GA***

**Name of Community:** Okefenokee Empowerment Board Champion Community

**Type of Designation:** Champion

**Best Practice Category:** Community Based Partnership

**Challenge:** The challenged face by many rural citizens is receiving affordable quality health care.

**Best Practice:** The McKinney Community Health Center (MCHC) major role is to provide primary and preventive medical care management for children, adolescents, adults, seniors, migrants, homeless, insured, uninsured and the underinsured. MCHC is staffed with one Internist, two Pediatricians, one Physician Assistant and an Extended RN. The Center provides a discount drug program for seniors over the age of 55. In 2000, MCHC wrote a proposal to the county for management of the Nelson Green Senior Center. The proposal was accepted and MCHC manages the day care of 35 to 40 seniors per day, five days a week at the Nelson Green Center. MCHC provides 98 home delivered meals to seniors per day.

**Background:** The McKinney Community Health Center was organized through the committed, steadfast efforts of the Ware County Community Coalition Board, the Macedonian Baptist Church, the Ware County Health Department and a number of other concerned, committed, community organizations and individuals in and out of Ware County. This is a unique because member of the community saw a health need in their community that was not being met and decided to collaborate to meet the need. Since establishing the MCHC it has been able to expand with the approval of the Bureau of Primary Health Care to the City of Nahunta, Brantley County, Georgia in 1999. Other partners have also come on board and donated an old credit union facility for MCHC expansion in Waycross. This same practice can be utilized in other communities that have the same dedication and commitment to insure that all of its citizens receive affordable quality health care. This practice is especially effective because of the hard work and dedication of the concerned citizens of Ware County and the MCHC Board of directors and the dedicated staff of MCHC.

**Results:** The McKinney Center is a not-for-profit (501c3) organization that is community owned through a volunteer governing board composed of leaders and residents of the community.

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## ***Oskaloosa REAP, IA***

**Name of Community:** Oskaloosa

**Type of Designation:** REAP

**Best Practice Category:** Sustainable Community Development

**Challenge:** Provide community development assistance to rural communities and create opportunities for value-added agriculture.

**Best Practice:** The Mahaska County Agricultural & Rural Development (MCARD) Program. Agriculture is fundamental to the economy of Mahaska County, providing a foundation essential to the well being of farm families and townspeople alike. Our farms and towns are mutually dependent and share a future with a potential for growth and vitality. MCARD Program was formed October 1998 to expand economic opportunities for our rural communities, local producers and value-added industries. The Oskaloosa Area Chamber & Development Group, Mahaska County's Board of Supervisors and local volunteers who serve as committee members oversee the activities of the MCARD Program. Types of projects include Agricultural, Rural Development and Grantmanship. Agricultural consists of, but not limited to, value-added projects on the farm and industrial level, programs for local producers and organic/sustainable Ag strategies. Rural Development areas include; assisting local development groups, small business start-ups & expansions, housing, child care, historical & cultural, sewer & water, roads & infrastructure and tourism. Grantmanship areas include researching funding resources, project-related grant writing and grant administration. This program has brought \$4,447,972 in loan/grant assistance to Mahaska County over the past 4 years. The smallest grant being \$250, the largest \$657,432 and has an 83% application success rate. The program acts as a liaison between Rural, City, County, State and Federal entities. It has been two years since the initial grant has ended and continues to receive funds to operate from the County, rural communities, the Oskaloosa Area Chamber, foundations and individual businesses

**Background:** This program should be considered as a best practice as it has; 1. Met its initial goal 2. Has provided a resource for the small communities to receive access to funds, representation, and economic opportunity. 3. Is sustainable. After only 2 years value was seen in the program and has been supported locally.

**Results:** This practice can be applied to almost any rural county. Board diversity is required. USDA Rural Development board membership has been a key factor.

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**Name of Community:** Oskaloosa, Iowa  
**Type of Designation:** REAP  
**Best Practice Category:** Creating and Celebrating

**Challenge:** Bridging the gap between rural and urban areas-promoting unity

**Best Practice:** Oskaloosa first held the "Town & County Banquet", in 1947, for an evening of entertainment and fellowship. 55 years later it continues to draw over 500 Mahaska County citizens of the 19,000 total population. The banquet is a potluck with two residents, (one town, and one rural) assigned to a table. They each provide the main meat course and are responsible for recruiting rural and town members to fill the table-4 and 4. The other county residents complete the menu. Each table can create its own theme and usually does. The tradition has become a competition among some regular table chairpersons. Originally it was a night of awards, as well as, food and entertainment, but it got quite lengthy. So it has now evolved to local entertainment, such as high school jazz bands and a creative orator who embellishes the similarities and differences of rural/urban living?

**Background:** This should be a considered a best practice because it's 55 year history, its draw of over 2.5% of the counties population for a night of fellowship. It promotes understanding and awareness of rural and urban issues.

**Results:** This practice would work best in a shifting population-rural move to city and city to country. The cost is minimal, the rewards great.

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**Name of Community:** Oskaloosa, Iowa  
**Type of Designation:** REAP  
**Best Practice Category:** Community Based Partnership

**Challenge:** To get communities to focus on a common vision for Mahaska County and show strength through collaboration.

**Best Practice:** Team Mahaska was formed to achieve the goal of countywide input of what is important to the citizens. 39 meetings were held across the county with 698 people participating of a 19,000 total county population. Monthly meetings are now held with 10 incorporated towns, 8 school districts and the County Board of Supervisors participating to keep abreast of changing issues. The result has been a countywide group called "Team Mahaska". Another unique development was a common web site for the county. A poster board for upcoming activities, surveys, and issues. Through the group's efforts a 2 cent sales tax was passed to build a new elementary school and send a prorated share of the funds back to the town for community projects and needs. It is the only 2-cent tax in Iowa and passed on the first vote. The web-site attracts former citizens as well as current residents with over 5000 hits per month.

**Background:** It should be considered a best practice because of what it represents to the citizens of Oshaloosa and Mahaska County. It originally was planned to be a short lived group with a specific goal, but now has grown to an ongoing group.

**Results:** Community input is needed. Facilitation, not direction.

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**Name of Community:** Oskaloosa, Iowa  
**Type of Designation:** REAP  
**Best Practice Category:** Managing Human Capital

**Challenge:** Sharing of grant writing knowledge and pooling of resources for the community Best Practice: The "Finding Funds" Group is a group of grant writers from various groups, businesses, institutions, and organizations that meet monthly. They present various grant or funding opportunities that have been accessed in the past and new ones that may be of interest. If letters of support is needed the group can quickly rally its resources to provide assistance. The group consists of over 25 different grant-writing members from USDA Rural Development to the Crisis Intervention Services. Each month deadlines are discussed and a sharing of funding sources reviewed. Successes are celebrated!!!!

**Background:** This should be considered a best practice, as most communities are unaware of what funding resource potential is available. They also would be surprised how many people actually have written or write grants in the community. This monthly meeting saves time, pools knowledge, and coordinates a community's effort to leverage funds it may not have done otherwise. It builds a funding team and manages human capital.

**Results:** Only finding the members. Oskaloosa is a rural community in Mahaska, County, Iowa. We are a typical rural town.

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**Name of Community:** Oskaloosa, Iowa  
**Type of Designation:** REAP  
**Best Practice Category:** Financing the Strategic Plan

**Challenge:** Removal of dilapidated housing in Oskaloosa.

**Best Practice:** Removal of dilapidated housing within the City of Oskaloosa is critical to the long range development of the community. As pointed out in the June 1996 Mahaska Future View Housing Status Report, approximately 11% was rated dilapidated. Additionally, a review in 2000 of the Mahaska County Assessor's records revealed 146 residential properties located within Oskaloosa were assessed for \$10,000 or less. The City of Oskaloosa has had such a success with its "First-Time Home Buyer Revolving Loan Fund" that it was awarded additional funds of \$240,000 in the form of a grant from the Iowa Economic Developments LHAP program. This brought about the establishment of the "Demolition Assistance Loan Program". This program provides a 5 year loan up to \$4,000 at 5% interest. The principal and interest is deferred over the first two years. The loan is forgiven if a structure is placed back on the property within 2 years. If the property is not redeveloped with the 2-year period, the loan is to be repaid with interest over the next 3 years. Over the last 4 years twenty-seven loans (\$96,512) have been issued. These twenty-seven properties had assessed values (structures) of \$240,856. Four of the properties have been redeveloped and are back on the tax roles with assessed values (structures) of \$367,360. Three other properties have been redeveloped but have been assessed for taxes, yet. Another six are under construction and 4 loans are being repaid.

**Background:** This is a best practice as it has far exceeded the community goals and is creating new housing while removing unsightly housing.

**Results:** Seed money must be obtained for the initial funding. Local bank support necessary as well as the use of USDA Rural Development Guaranteed Loans and or Fannie Mae Programs.

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**Name of Community:** Oskaloosa, Iowa  
**Type of Designation:** REAP  
**Best Practice Category:** Financing the Strategic Plan

**Challenge:** A housing needs assessment was done for the City of Oskaloosa in June of 1996. The assessment cited a need for additional housing in Oskaloosa.

**Best Practice:** Recognizing that one of the most difficult areas a young family has is the down payment and closing costs, Randy Irwin of Oskaloosa's Housing & Community Development, obtained a \$50,000 Iowa Economic Development LHAP Grant in conjunction with \$50,000 from the City of Oskaloosa and \$33,320 from 15 area businesses for a total fund of \$123,700. The program is called the "First-time Home Buyer Down Payment and Closing Cost Revolving Loan Fund". The program loans up to \$3,500 and is required to be matched by the family. The funds can be used for closing costs and/or down payment assistance. The loan is secured by a mortgage on the property and the

payments are direct deposit. The family must attend homeownership training course and be certified. This can be done at a qualified lender or through the housing department. The terms are 10 year repayment at 0, yes zero, percent interest. The family's income cannot exceed 115% of the median income for the county. Since its conception, the program has made 149 loans, totaling \$271,251 and assisted with \$8.2 million in home purchases over the past 4 years. The program has allowed existing homeowners to sell their home and build or upgrade their housing. The result is an increase in housing starts, hence, more housing.

**Background:** It should be considered a best practice as it is a revolving fund and sustainable. It has helped numerous lower income families achieve homeownership.

**Results:** Seed money must be obtained for the initial funding. Local bank support necessary as well as the use of USDA Rural Development Guaranteed Loans and or Fannie Mae Programs.

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**Name of Community:** Oskaloosa, Iowa

**Type of Designation:** REAP

**Best Practice Category:** Other

**Category Name:** Sustainable Agricultural Research Education Project

**Challenge:** The challenge was to develop a project that involved community support of a sustainable agriculture demonstration project.

**Best Practice:** The Mahaska County Agricultural & Rural Development (MCARD) Group developed a grape, sweet com, and poultry project idea to demonstrate that agriculture is more than monoculture cropping. That system can be coordinated in such a way to benefit each other and be achieving this we can lessen the effects on the environment and increase farm income. The project was presented to the Mahaska Future View Board, a 501 3c non-profit, organization for their support of Iowa State University Leopold Center Grant. They issued their full support and the application was submitted. Although the application was not funded, the community has developed an ownership of the program. Part of the demonstration was having the community support the project by becoming a market for the goods. To this date, 350 chickens have been started, vines and sweet com planted. All the chickens are sold and the sweet com will be spot lighted at the Oskaloosa's Annual Sweet Com Serenade Festival.

**Background:** This is a best practice as it has and continues to demonstrate that a community can assume and educational role as well as achieve pride of ownership. The initial reaction was one of it will never work to told you so isn't this fun. The children of our FF A, 4-H, and schools will have a new look on agriculture and be a generation of different thinkers.

**Results:** Crops need to be tailored to area or region of country.

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## ***Southernmost Illinois Delta EZ, GA***

**Name of Community:** Southernmost Illinois Delta EZ

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:**

### 1. Project Description

The first Johnson County Storytelling Festival was created to preserve the oral history traditions of Southern Illinois, and also as a performance festival that would attract and entertain audiences in an area where there is rarely any exposure to the arts. A huge contingent of volunteers is involved in this project, which has received a 2002 Governor's Home Town Award. This year's festival will take place at Vienna High School on Saturday, October 26, 2002.

Demand for storytellers from the first festival has been surprising, and we have an ongoing request for these outstanding performers. Every time a storyteller is booked somewhere, they "advertise" the festival as the place where they were discovered. That these entertainers are finally able to earn some income from their talent is something we never expected from the festival. Two have agreed to be sponsors of the 2nd Annual Johnson County Storytelling Festival!

The superb quality of writers who entered last year's storytelling festival has resulted in publication, television coverage, and reading invitations for authors. The story "Silent Night" by 86-year-old William Ernest Moore is a poignant example of the quality of written entries, and is included at the end of this best practice.

There were two 86-year-olds who entered and won at last year's storytelling festival, along with 7-year-olds and every age in between. This event was structured to include participation from all generations, and it was inspiring to see winners approach the podium at the awards ceremony. Committee members include students, businessmen, educators, writers, entertainers, economic developers, officials, a number of senior citizens, and even a chemist. People from all walks of life in this community have and continue to support this project. The oral tradition of the area is so precious to people here that they will not let it die.

### 2. Project goals

The 2nd Annual Johnson County Storytelling Festival will once again provide a badly needed entertainment option for this region. It will showcase the talents of amazing performance artists and writers, and preserve the oral tradition of Southern Illinois. Last year's festival started to become a tourist draw, with competitors and audience members driving in from neighboring states. We expect this year's festival to reach its maximum audience capacity, and to be a boon to local hotels, restaurants, and newly-opened B&Bs. In year three we look forward to expanding to a weekend festival, which will have more artistic and economic impact. The ultimate goal over some years will be to host a week-long festival that will have major economic and tourism impact on our area.

### 4. Underserved population of Southern Illinois

The original seed capital for the Johnson County Storytelling Festival came from SIDEZ (Southernmost Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone, Inc.). SIDEZ is one of only ten rural empowerment zones in the United States, and this EZ is comprised of Alexander, Johnson, and Pulaski counties. Some politicians describe the regions served in the American empowerment zones as "economic disaster areas," so to say that our populations are underserved is quite an understatement. Beyond high unemployment, poor living conditions, and few opportunities, there are almost no entertainment options in the area beyond church and school activities. The Johnson County Storytelling Festival offers an opportunity for people of all ages to showcase their talents, all the while serving as the entertainment for audiences that gather for the show. The grand champion of the first storytelling festival, Marlene Rivero, presented a first-person account of the life of Harriet Tubman. Her performance was well-rehearsed, professional, entertaining, but also poignant and full of African-American pride. Many in the audience had never heard the story of Harriet Tubman, so the festival served as a vehicle for education, as well as entertainment.

The Illinois Humanities Council also supported this project, and this year the Illinois Arts Council through Carbondale Community Arts has granted funding. We hope to continue with a smaller SIDEZ grant and the same IHC funding as last year. Prize money was provided in 2001 and will also be available in 2002 from local businesses that see the heritage and entertainment value of storytelling.

#### 5. Artistic goals and future plans

The next two years are critical to the longevity of the Johnson County Storytelling Festival. The first festival exceeded all expectations in participation, quality, publicity, and audience numbers. The 2002 festival has been expanded to include more events and accommodate more participants in both the performance and written categories. If this second festival maxes out in attendance, year three will be expanded to a full weekend festival with nominal charges for admission.

#### 6. Artistic background and history of sponsor organization

The Johnson County Genealogical & Historical Society, Inc. was formed into an Illinois not-for-profit organization in 1989. The organization's certificate of good standing is attached to this application. The president is Gary Hacker, who has provided consistent, competent, and forward-thinking leadership for many years. JCGHS provides monthly programming in Johnson County pertaining to history, folklore, native arts, and oral traditions. In 2001 the organization embarked on an oral history project to document on tape and transcript the life experiences of Johnson County's oldest residents.

Storytelling has been a tradition in this region, and the Johnson County Storytelling Festival was created to preserve and nurture this unique aspect of Southern Illinois life. The resulting performance festival showcased the talents of storytellers from throughout Southern Illinois, as well as the marvelous written storytelling abilities of writers. The Johnson County Genealogical & Historical Society is committed to building this festival into a major national event.

#### 7. Time line of project tasks

Monthly meetings have been taking place since last year's storytelling festival, and grant applications are being made during the first quarter of 2002. Corporate sponsors have agreed to stick with the project, and more are being recruited to cover prize money for new categories created to expand the festival. In-kind donations of staff, office facilities, phone, copying, and other costs have been, and will continue to be identified. We expect notification on all funding by summer.

Johnson County, the Johnson County Chamber of Commerce, and SIDEZ provide the services of and office for a project manager to oversee, organize, and manage the volunteer staff for this event.

Feature stories will be mailed to arts, entertainment, rural life, and travel magazines in the first and second quarter of 2002 to allow editors enough time to plan for stories related to the festival. A brochure has been designed for the 2nd Annual Johnson County Storytelling Festival by a Peace Corps Fellow assigned to this project by SIDEZ. She will assist through May on promotional work, and by June 1st 10,000 brochures will be printed. This year's brochure will include a detachable entry form.

Dr. Kathryn Ward of SIU's Department of Sociology served as project scholar for the first festival. She is a recognized proponent of storytelling and oral history. Dr. Ward or another sociologist trained in her methods will advise and guide this project for the second year, and training will be set up during the summer of 2002. The project scholar also serves as judge for the Grand Championship, which is the climax of the storytelling festival.

Brochures will be given out by committee members at general assemblies in area schools to encourage student participation. Whenever possible, a storyteller is recruited to perform for the children and stimulate their interest. Other performances and promotional visits will be scheduled to feature storytellers and committee members at senior and adult venues to encourage their participation as well. Brochures will be mailed to writers and arts groups throughout Illinois, with particular emphasis on the Southern 33 counties. Weekly news articles will be released on interesting entries received from competitors to stimulate audience attendance.

The committee decided not to charge admission again this year, but to raise the entry fee from \$.50 to \$1.00. Prize money remains \$50 for first place, \$30 for second, and \$20 for third, with a huge Grand Championship trophy for the best of the best. It is expected that \$1,300 in corporate sponsorships will cover the prize money to be awarded. The festival will take place at Vienna High School on Saturday, October 26, 2002. Individual event competitions take place in the morning and early afternoon, with first place winners competing for the top prize in the afternoon. An awards ceremony will crown the day, with the Grand Championship trophy the final prize awarded. A light catered lunch will be provided by Little Shop of Pastries Café.

Survey results will be analyzed and reported to the committee in November, and by December a final report on the 2nd Annual Johnson County Storytelling Festival will be available describing the festival's results and performance.

#### 8. Project evaluation and performance measures

This project's committee never tires of meetings, evaluation, and reevaluation. Our first performance measure will be that we were successful in capturing funds to cover all anticipated expenses. The second performance measure will be to reach the maximum capacity of audience for a one-day event or 250. A third is to increase receipts from \$200 to \$500, and with this goal in mind there will be plenty of quality entrants in all categories. All prize money was actively competed for and awarded last year, and we expect the same result in 2002. A fourth and final performance measure will be an audit of audience members to see what they liked best about the storytelling festival. The Illinois Humanities Council provided an instrument to measure audience satisfaction and gather demographics. We will use this survey again in 2002.

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## ***Southwestern North Dakota REAP, ND***

**Name of Community:** Southwestern North Dakota

**Type of Designation:** REAP

**Best Practice Category:** Community Based Partnership

**Challenge:** This project created a "brand" for sixty independently owned western vacation experience providers. That brand was used in the creation of a shared web site, and brochure.

**Best Practice:** While the rest of America is pretty sure rural America is just like they left it twenty years ago, rural families have been reinventing themselves within the tourism industry. This move to tourism allowed many families to stay on the land and continue to use their agricultural and businesses skills in what is becoming a very profitable sector in the state's economy. Western experience vacations include traditional ranch experiences, hunting, fishing, birding, biking, canoeing, and camping to name just a few activities. This project created a brand name "Dakota West Adventures" that brings these separate entities together under one marketing effort. The projects assist the project owners and the state tourism department by providing "timeless" tourism materials for them to distribute and incidentally helped create awareness within that agency of the many successful local businesses in this industry.

**Background:** This project is unique because it brought together several players - sixty private business, the state departments of tourism and economic development, the federal forest service, it's REAP Zone, and a non-profit corporation. Though it was not a big project financially, it created awareness of these independent businesses among all the partners and provided an opportunity for all to work on simple beginner tools to support these local businesses in a team effort. This project has also potentially "opens the gate" so to speak towards vacation packaging or events among the businesses, other shared marketing proposals, and quite possibly shared visions towards creating a larger experience as providers group together. This practice clearly identified the right partners. A large group of businesses with common themes had a good logical approach and a simple plan that would meet their common needs as well as some needs of the new partners they approached.

**Results:** This project recognized the new tourism group formed by the Southwest REAP Zone and the western vacation providers as a sub-committee of the REAP Investment Board. The RIB is the non-profit organizational arm of the two North Dakota REAP Zones. This sub-committee status came with an agreement of understanding that outlined their common goals and allowed them to apply as a team for state and federal funding using the RIB's 501(c) 3 status. The project was further assisted by funding made available to the regional councils within the North Dakota REAP Zones by the Economic Development Administration. These dollars help to provided technical assistance throughout the project and supplemented the small budget by keeping the project on track and probably the most important thing - a neutral party that kept them accountable to their earlier shared vision.

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### *Town of Austin EC, IN*

**Name of Community:** Town of Austin - Austin Rural Enterprise Community

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Leadership Development

**Challenge:** High out migration of High School Graduates - no future plans to become involved with community.

**Best Practice:** AREC Future Leaders of Austin Program, designed for 12 Austin High School Students, focusing on development of junior leadership skills, including all aspects of economic and social factors, housing, education, community development and government. Students spend one day per month developing specific skills related to the topic of the month, including guest speakers and planned field trips. The groups must also complete two community service projects designed to fill a need within the Strategic Plan and our community. The plan encompasses all aspects of project planning, budgeting and implementation.

**Background:** Leadership programs are everywhere - the beauty of this program is it reaches students most likely to leave our community following high school graduation and installs a sense of community service beginning at an early age and with hope; at least 50% of the graduates will return and become future leaders in our community. This program has been extremely successful and viewed very favorably amongst the students, school administration, community leaders, area business and social service organizations and parents. During the 2002-2003 school years, this program will also be offered in the Middle School level. The high school program logo is Future Leaders of Austin - FLA, "Learning to Soar", the middle school logo will be Junior Leaders of Austin - JLA, "Earning our Wings". Competition for these programs is considerable and treated as a reward for selected students. During the 2001-2002 school years, students were required to have a minimum 3.4 GPA. During 2002-2003, the GPA requirement for both programs has been reduced to 2.5, thus allowing participation of more students less likely to enter post secondary programs and enter into community service areas at an earlier age.

**Results:** This program works very well with the AREC Executive Director serving as the program director and utilizing guest speakers and field trips as much as possible, thereby affording the students a first-hand view. Each month the students submit a report of previous session activities and lessons learned.

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**Name of Community:** Town of Austin - Austin Rural Enterprise Community

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** Leadership Development

**Challenge:** High out migration of High School Graduates - no future plans to become involved with community

**Best Practice:** AREC Future Leaders of Austin Program, designed for 12 Austin High School Students, focusing on development of junior leadership skills, including all aspects of economic and social factors, housing, education, community development and government. Students spend one day per month developing specific skills related to the topic of the month, including guest speakers and planned field trips. The groups must also complete two community service projects designed to fill a need within the Strategic Plan and our community. The plan encompasses all aspects of project planning, budgeting and implementation.

**Background:** Leadership programs are everywhere - the beauty of this program is it reaches students most likely to leave our community following high school graduation and installs a sense of community service beginning at an early age and with hope; at least 50% of the graduates will return and become future leaders in our community. This program has been extremely successful and viewed very favorably amongst the students, school administration, community leaders, area business and social service organizations and parents. During the 2002-2003 school years, this program will also be offered in the Middle School level. The high school program logo is Future Leaders of Austin - FLA, "Learning to Soar", the middle school logo will be Junior Leaders of Austin - JLA, "Earning our Wings". Competition for these programs is considerable and treated as a reward for selected students. During the 2001-2002 school year, students were required to have a minimum 3.4 GPA. During 2002-2003, the GPA requirement for both programs has been reduced to 2.5, thus allowing participation of more students less likely to enter post secondary programs and enter into community service areas at an earlier age.

**Results:** This program works very well with the AREC Executive Director serving as the program director and utilizing guest speakers and field trips as much as possible, thereby affording the students a first-hand view. Each month the students submit a report of previous session activities and lessons learned.

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**Name of Community:** Town of Austin - Austin Rural Enterprise Community

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Best Practice Category:** 'Creating and Celebrating

**Challenge:** lack of overall community pride, poor housing conditions, severe clean-up issues within business and housing areas.

**Best Practice:** AREC Austin PRIDE Award. Monthly award given to homeowners selected by a peer review committee which demonstrates the best overall community pride through their property. Homes which have made a remarkable improvement to either the laws, facade, or general clean-up effort are nominated by residents to the Austin Beautification Committee. Nominees are reviewed and then 3 properties are submitted to the AREC Housing and Beautification Committee for review and selection of the monthly winner. Winners are announced during the monthly AREC Board

meetings and presented with a framed photo of their home along with the placement of a yard sign identifying their accomplishments. This program began in June 2001 and has received outstanding comments from local, state and federal elected officials and the community at large.

**Background:** Our community was in serious disrepair and full of street after street displaying homes with large trash and debris items, junk automobiles and overall household garbage. Even though efforts were made by Town officials to conduct yearly clean-ups, the community had never felt an incentive to care. This program now allows neighbors to encourage each other and actually compete for the coveted award.

**Results:** This program works because we partner with the Town of Austin Beautification Committee and a sub-committee of our Housing & Beautification Committee. All nominations are made by the public and all winners are selected by community volunteers through the peer process.

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### *West Virginia State Office, WV*

**Name:** West Virginia State Office/Benedum/USDA Collaborative for Champions

**Participants:** 1) Mountain Champion Community First, Inc. 2) Tri-County Champions, and 3) Lincoln County Champion Community

**Type of Community:** Champions

**Category:** Sustainable Community Development

#### **Brief Statement of Challenge:**

During 2001, more than 55 communities throughout the U.S. submitted applications for a shot at becoming one of two Empowerment Zones under Round III of the USDA Rural Empowerment Zones (EZ) Program. The fact that only 2 EZs would receive designation and possible funding did little to intimidate West Virginia communities. Twelve communities throughout the region vigorously sought designation under the EZ competition. The application process required development of a comprehensive, strategic community plan engaging broad community participation and support. In each community, local leaders and stake holders joined energy and commitment to lead a series of meetings and work sessions to develop a strategic plan that truly represented area diversity, values, and common vision.

Following the EZ designation process, communities that were not successful at becoming designated were provided an opportunity to become Champion Communities. While no cash award accompanies the designation, the ten-year agreement provides participating communities ongoing USDA Rural Development support for implementing their strategic plans. Under the best of circumstances, however, the Champion Community (CC) designation does little to sustain local enthusiasm and energy for a long, arduous and seemingly impossible mission. Rural Development, WV sought a solution for keeping enthusiasm high and building upon the synergy already born out of the EZ application process while further enhancing the ability of CCs.

**Process:**

In response to the need to enhance Champion Communities, the USDA and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation established a collaborative partnership. The partnership resulted in a cooperative agreement between USDA and the Foundation. The goal of the partnership is to “Grow Champions.” Through a phased program of guidance and leadership development Champion communities receive 1) technical assistance and training tools; 2) on-going capacity building through monthly leadership and training sessions; 3) funding for Champion Projects thru a mini-grants program; and 4) grant award and celebration.

**Win, Win, Win:** The Mini-Grants Program” is being offered to three Champion Communities. The premise of both the Community Mini-Grants Program and the Champion Community initiative is to involve many people from the community in organizing, skill building and completion of small, self identified, community projects. The program offers mini-grants from \$500 to \$2000 to small teams of 3 or more people for community oriented projects of their choice provided they support sustainable outcomes and the vision, mission and goals of the CC strategic plan. To be eligible for the mini-grant at least three members of every small team must attend four out of five 4-hour training sessions. The intent of the process is to provide a learning experience that builds long lasting impacts. During monthly training sessions, participants are provided the opportunity to express their views on community improvement, projects they are pursuing in their communities, and brainstorm ways they might partner with other people and organizations to accomplish their goals.

### **Why a Best Practice**

The design and implementation of the Benedum Community Mini-Grants Program begins to address some of the issues relating to capacity building, specialized skill training and small project development. As such, the “tools” acquired by community residents have significant potential to support and advance Champion Community planning, action and outcomes. Thus far, program participants have completed 30-100% of their tourism, health care, transportation and leadership training benchmarks. More than 12 county-wide meetings have been held.

The use of the mini-grant experience combined with the structure of the Champion Community process serves to provide a model for future investment of both financial and technical assistance. The experience of participating communities will help them access financial resources not fully tapped heretofore.

### **Special Conditions under which the Practice Works Best**

Champion designation is required in order to participate in the Mini-Grants Program. The strategic plans prepared by Communities serve as the foundation for both Champion Program and Mini-Grant Program designation. Many strategic plans produced a good start but some lack a strong development strategy. The structure of the CC Program and Mini-Grant Program serves to aid strategic plan development and encourage continued grass roots community participation and collaboration among funding agencies, technical assistances sources and community-based organizations. A real plus, which in most instances, contributes to the organizational capacity is that CCs have boards of directors with established governance. Each possesses a strategic plan for achieving their vision and goals born of an open and inclusive process of planning and implementation. Each has established action plans or benchmarks for overcoming problems and realizing opportunities.

### **Contact for More Information**

For more information about this initiative and its participants, you may reach Mary Hunt, Program Officer, at the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation by calling (412) 288-0360, or reach her via email at: [mhunt@benedum.org](mailto:mhunt@benedum.org).

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## ***Wichita County EC, KS***

**Name of Community:** Wichita County, Kansas

**Type of Designation:** EZEC

**Category Name:** Business Development

**Challenge:** Lack of assistance to help local entrepreneurs successfully develop business ventures.

**Best Practice:** Enterprise Facilitation captures the talents of rural people who have the ideas and dreams for a new business, but lack the knowledge, skills and resources to pursue the project to success. There are two key components to successful Enterprise Facilitation - a large, locally formed Enterprise Facilitation board and a hired trained facilitator. The initial board serves two main functions. First, they provide a link to community resources or will become the resource themselves. The second and more important function is to provide leads (introductions) to the hired facilitator. During the first year each board member is expected to physically introduce the facilitator to ten people (50 member board x 10 introductions = 500 leads). Each board member receives a minimum of one day training and eleven board members, along with the facilitator, receive the more detailed weeklong facilitator training. The facilitator is a skilled or semi-skilled person who is trainable and preferably does not have a long economic development background. The facilitator is a business coach and provides sound business practices. The facilitator is the first contact person in the process. Clients are expected to make the first contact and the facilitator travels to meet the client on their turf. The facilitator does not go out and seek clients but rather relies on the board introductions, word of mouth, and general marketing. The theory of enterprise facilitation asserts that no businessperson can be equally good at finance, marketing and production at the same time. Entrepreneurs are quickly screened to determine which of the three elements of a successful business their "personal passion" is. The facilitator then helps the client form a team to assist with the elements of the business the client is less skilled at. The business team writes the business plan so that there is equal interest in the production, marketing and finance functions. Facilitation finds the community-based help that the client needs to be successful. The facilitator may know of persons in the community who can help the client and will make an immediate introduction. If the problem or need cannot be met immediately, then the project becomes the subject of the facilitator's detailed report to the board, where the board helps find the assistance the client needs. New start-up businesses often have a cash flow problem, so the payment for services is encouraged to be deferred or bartered in some way, although assistance from the facilitator is free. Enterprise Facilitation is a grassroots, bottom-up approach to economic development, often compared to an old-fashioned barn-raising. It brings the community members together to help one another be successful.

**Background:** Rural areas of Kansas lack jobs and job opportunities to retain the young. Business recruitment activities often do not fit rural areas because the rural areas lack the physical, human and capital capacity to attract and assimilate industry into the community. Businesses recruited to the state frequently do not want to locate in rural areas because of these issues and the remoteness of locations. Enterprise Facilitation is the logical answer to new job creation in small communities.

It will not replace recruitment or retention efforts in traditional economic development programs, but will complement them.

**Results:** UNANSWERED

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