



Kansas PRIDE Review

2004 - 2005 Program Year



Building Better Communities



Aquila

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Dear PRIDE Members and Friends:

I want to extend my sincere congratulations to all involved in this year's PRIDE program. I have had the pleasure of serving on the Kansas PRIDE, Inc. board for the past four years. During that time, I have learned that PRIDE communities possess two significant traits – (1) the desire to sustain and improve the community and (2) the willingness to work collaboratively to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals. It's been a wonderful experience to recognize your community projects and initiatives during that time!

This year we combined the annual PRIDE Day conference with the Main Street conference. While this is a change from prior years, the new format provides PRIDE representatives the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sessions over a three-day period. Public recognition of Community of Excellence and Star Award recipients, as well as youth awards for leadership and service, will take place at a special conference luncheon.

Kansas PRIDE remains viable because of the dedication of the professional staff that supports the program. I want to personally thank Ruth Smerchek, Dan Kahl, Mary Mathiot, and Jeanne Stinson for their continued efforts on behalf of the program.

And so, as PRIDE enters its 36th year, I look forward to future opportunities to support your efforts to build and sustain vital, active communities. On behalf of the PRIDE corporate sponsors, thank you for the effort and dedication you give to your communities.

Sincerely,

Larissa Long
2005 Board Chairperson
Kansas PRIDE, Inc.

Kansas PRIDE Program

The Kansas PRIDE program is a citizen-based approach to improve the quality of life in Kansas communities. Founded on the belief that the best solutions for community improvement must come from the community itself, Kansas PRIDE encourages citizens to work together in identifying community improvement projects. The PRIDE program offers a network of ideas along with the tools and resources needed to assist a community in developing plans and achieving its goals. Kansas PRIDE also recognizes successful community improvement with statewide publicity and celebration events.

The program is co-administered through the Kansas Department of Commerce and K-State Research and Extension. Kansas PRIDE Inc., a nonprofit organization is the third collaborative partner in the PRIDE program. Kansas PRIDE Inc. engages private-sector companies and associations that provide financial support for community evaluation and recognition.

Kansas PRIDE recognizes that developing livable communities involves looking at several aspects of community life. Enrolled communities are asked to examine the local social, economic, and physical environment by completing a Community Assessment Tool. This process helps the community to become involved in discussions about the current community status and to consider areas of improvement. Next, PRIDE encourages the community to discuss the ideal vision for the future of the community. Energy grows when the community begins to look forward and plan together, and to cooperate on project goals. PRIDE staff is available to assist with planning and resource identification, and Kansas PRIDE helps to recognize those communities that are successful in creating better Kansas communities!

Benefits of Participating in PRIDE

- ◆ Assessment of needs and opportunities
- ◆ Development of community partnerships
- ◆ Increased citizen involvement
- ◆ Expanded leadership opportunities
- ◆ Recognition for community improvement efforts
- ◆ Sustainable community development
- ◆ Creation of a shared community vision
- ◆ Identification and utilization of resources
- ◆ Elevated community spirit
- ◆ Networking with other communities
- ◆ Increased community capacity

Kansas PRIDE Inc. Board of Directors

Members of the 2005 Kansas PRIDE, Inc., Board of Directors include representatives of sponsoring corporations and organizations, PRIDE Community of Excellence representatives, and representatives of the two administering organizations of the PRIDE program; K-State Research and Extension and the Kansas Department of Commerce. The Kansas PRIDE Inc. Board of Directors provides guidance and raises funds for the recognition of outstanding community achievement through the Kansas PRIDE Program. It is with gratitude that we recognize the following 2005 board members:

Larissa Long, Chairperson

Aquila, Inc.

Bob Helm, Treasurer

Midwest Energy, Inc.

James Bartling

Atmos Energy Corporation

Kimberly Winn

League of Kansas Municipalities

Jerry Lindberg

Kansas Economic Development Alliance

Sandy Williams

Eskridge PRIDE

Rex Woods

Kinsley PRIDE

Ruth Smerchek

Kansas Department of Commerce

Jeanne Stinson

Kansas Department of Commerce

Dean Schmidt

Potwin PRIDE

George Smith

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Dorothy Lickteig

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Rossville PRIDE

Patty Clark, Community Development Director

Kansas Department of Commerce

Dr. Daryl Buchholz, Associate Director

K-State Research and Extension

Staff

Dan Kahl

K-State Research and Extension

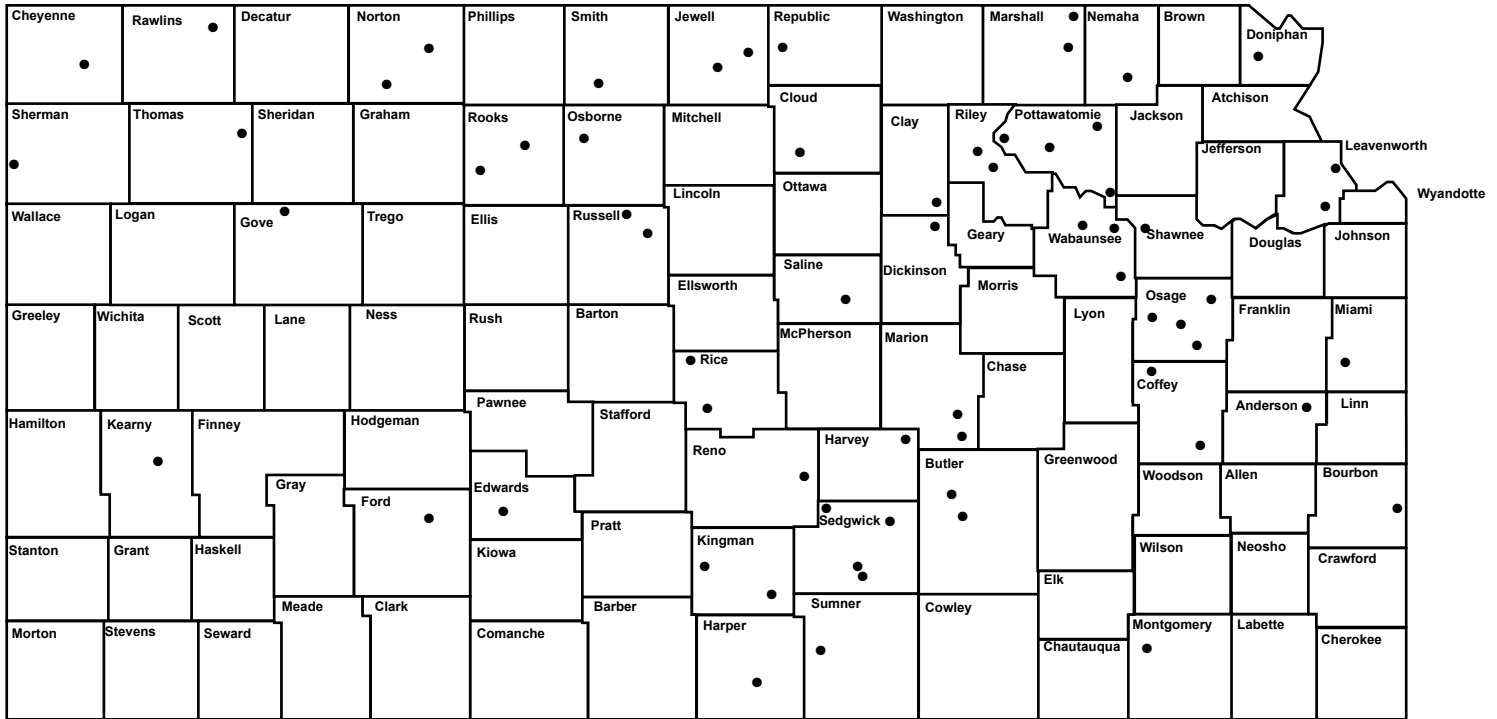
Connie Hoch

K-State Research and Extension

PRIDE Impacts Communities

In the 2004-2005 PRIDE year, 65 Kansas communities enrolled in the PRIDE program. These communities have taken action to identify and address projects to improve local health, economy, social needs, and the environment. PRIDE groups across Kansas are stepping up and taking positive steps to address local issues and improve the community where they live. These communities recognize that community development involves social development and improving the physical community as well as encouraging economic growth. PRIDE communities involve business owners, youth, community organizations, and volunteers of all kinds to create positive change. Through this process, PRIDE groups are developing leadership capacity and utilizing available resources to steer their communities successfully to the future.

2005 PRIDE Communities



(Populations and county shown in parenthesis)

Alden (168) RC	Elk City (301) MG	Lansing (9,430) LV	Overbrook (974) OS
Almena (469) NT	Esbridge (582) WB	Lebo (955) CF	Palco (244) RO
Alton (114) OB	Florence (671) MN	Lenora (300) NT	Park City (5,944) SG
Anthony (2,440) HP	Formoso (122) JW	LeRoy (588) CF	Paxico (210) WB
Argonia (524) SU	Fort Scott (8,261) BB	Lucas (427) RS	Potwin (449) BU
Assaria (447) SA	Gaylord (141) SM	Luray (197) RS	Randolph (168) RL
Axtell (439) MS	Glasco (520) CD	Lyndon (1,038) OS	Rexford (156) TH
Basehor (2,324) LV	Goff (177) NM	Mankato (976) JW	Riley (886) RL
Beattie (273) MS	Greeley (330) AN	McFarland (266) WB	Rossville (1,009) SN
Bird City (472) CN	Grinnell (323) GO	Melvorn (433) OS	Spearville (817) FO
Burns (271) MN	Haven (1,172) RN	Mount Hope (829) SG	St. Marys (2,221) PT
Bushton (314) RC	Haysville (9,077) SG	Norwich (543) KM	Stockton (1,535) RO
Chapman (1,233) DK	Herndon (146) RA	Olsburg (189) PT	Towanda (1,319) BU
Clearwater (2,173) SG	Highland (983) DP	Onaga (697) PT	Wakefield (841) CY
Courtland (322) RP	Kanorado (240) SH	Osage City (3,043) OS	Walton (287) HV
Cunningham (504) KM	Kinsley (1,592) ED	Osawatomie (4,635) MI	Westmoreland (628) PT
	Lakin (2,336) KE		

Population Source: U.S. Bureau 2000 (Certified July 1, 2002)

Youth Recognition Awards

Developing a healthy community requires the involvement and efforts of the entire community. Kansas PRIDE has noted that youth/adult partnerships have contributed to positive change in Kansas communities. Youth provide energy and creativity to community work and have a significant impact through their service to the community. The Kansas PRIDE program understands that the future of rural Kansas must involve youth attraction and retention to rural communities. Therefore, PRIDE recognizes the outstanding efforts of youth involved in community improvement through the PRIDE Youth Recognition Awards. Nominations were sought from communities in two categories: the PRIDE Youth Leadership Award and the PRIDE Youth Community Service Award.

27.6% of the Kansas Population was under 18 years of age in the year 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population

Youth Community Service Awards

Developing an appreciation for the value of community service is one way to kindle the love for, and investment in, community. The Youth Community Service Award provides an opportunity for young people to be recognized for their volunteer service. This award is presented to youth nominated by their community PRIDE. Because they have significantly contributed to local community betterment efforts, PRIDE would like to recognize the following youth for their outstanding community service.

Colby Naegele (Lucas) An active volunteer at the Lucas Area Community Theater, Colby helps with concessions, cleaning the theater, and operating the stage lighting during activities. The Lucas Theater is operated solely by volunteers, so youth like Colby are a great help with the operation of the theater. As a youth representative for the Lucas PRIDE committee and Lucas Area Chamber of Commerce, Colby knows the true meaning of community. Youth volunteers have an understanding of what it takes to keep a community project functional. Colby is a shining example of why the Lucas community can accomplish so many great things. Kansas PRIDE is pleased to recognize Colby Naegele for his outstanding service!



Lucas Youth

Lindsay Turner (Norwich) When a January ice storm hit Norwich, Lindsay, a member of the Norwich Fire Explorer Post #2400, assisted the fire department by helping with traffic control and assisting emergency crews. She volunteered more than 40 hours with the Norwich Fire Department, cleared limbs and storm debris from city streets, answered phones at the Senior Center, and assisted in serving meals to those without electricity and to work crews. She is not only reliable, but also kept a positive attitude despite the situation and long hours. Lindsay filled candy sacks for Santa Day and assisted younger members in her local 4-H club. Her strong dedication to serve her community has earned her the PRIDE Youth Community Service Award.

Christopher Maxwell (Lansing) Christopher's community service and personal impact extends well beyond the border of Lansing! He has participated in Leukemia fund-raisers, county and community clean-up projects, and has been a volunteer with organizations in Lansing. He organized the National Honor Society Tutoring of Fellow Students, where students who needed help with their studies were paired with a high school tutor. Christopher has an impressive record, which is an amazing start for a young life headed for success. Through his concern for the community, Christopher Maxwell has earned the Kansas PRIDE community service recognition award.

Honorable Mention

Jena Jessup (Almena) Members of the Almena PRIDE organization nominated Jena for the recognition for her community service. Jena is very active in 4-H, FFA, and Student Council. Jena took a leadership role in several community projects including painting benches from the downtown area, putting up Christmas lights and decorations, and working on an information board for the roadside park. Jena helped with the community survey by compiling the information that was received. The community as a whole has been enriched by the work of Jena Jessup!

PRIDE Youth Leadership Awards

The Youth Leadership Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated leadership skills through: addressing a community issue; proposing a new idea and organizing teams or efforts to implement the idea; helping to resolve a community issue; or inspiring others to community service. The following individuals have demonstrated these leadership characteristics and were selected for the 2005 PRIDE Youth Leadership Award.

Linda Poe (Norwich) Linda's leadership and community involvement has made a difference in Norwich. As president of Students Against Destructive Decisions, she has helped organize projects with an emphasis on community awareness and involvement. Her vision for the SADD Chapter resulted in bringing 400 students and adults together for an alcohol awareness program. With a positive and appreciative attitude, Linda acknowledges that it takes all members of a school and community to achieve the goals the SADD chapter identified. Kansas PRIDE is pleased to recognize the outstanding leadership and commitment to community that Linda has provided to Norwich.



Grinnell Youth

Jessica Ann Rehmer (Grinnell) Jessica Rehmer's leadership is much like the other activities in a small town. They may be considered small, but once the numbers are put together one realizes what leadership she provided. Jessica uses her involvement in PRIDE, National Honor Society, Student Council, Technology Student Association, Catholic Youth Organization, school activities, and the Farm Bureau Leadership America Camp to promote and enhance leadership skills. When PRIDE has a project, Jessica gives volunteer hours and leadership. Being the captain of the basketball team and head cheerleader has taught her the meaning of teamwork and leadership. Jessica learned the importance of good communication. She states that she listens to all before taking action, an important part of leadership. Youth inspiring youth can only lead to a positive outcome when they lead other youth into future with a feeling of responsibility for community.



Potwin Youth Group

Honorable Mention

Joey Cooper (Almena) Joey has been described as a leader of leaders. By taking a leadership role, Joey has helped class members finish projects that were needed within the community. The Leadership Class has helped PRIDE with three projects this year, volunteering more than 2,000 hours. The projects served to improve the quality of life in the small town of Almena. In addition, Joey also takes part in Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program, providing a great opportunity to serve as a positive role model to younger youth. The Almena community is very impressed with Joey and his contribution to community.

Kayla Adams (Argonia) Kayla has been active in a variety of activities while attending Argonia High School. Kayla states that helping with Friendship Meals has given her an opportunity to interact with the senior citizens of the community. Other activities that keep her involved include KAY club, Student Council, National Honor Society, and church. Kayla uses her leadership skills to benefit the Argonia Community and Argonia PRIDE is pleased to honor Kayla.

Cole Mettlen (Lucas) Cole takes an active role in making things happen for his school, community, and church. He has been a part of special projects at the rest home, odd jobs for the elderly, community dinners, and community bake sales. Cole has been raised in a family that has dedicated themselves to helping youth, especially in sports and church activities. He is the play by play announcer at the Junior High football games. Cole's leadership among his peers has inspired them to work as a team to volunteer in the Lucas community.

PRIDE communities:

- assess the situation,
 - identify their vision,
 - prioritize their goals,
 - involve the community, and
 - celebrate success!
-

STAR Award Recipients

Each year the PRIDE program recognizes outstanding projects that address a community need, a high level of citizen involvement, and that enhance the quality of life in Kansas. To receive the STAR Award, a community must nominate an outstanding project they completed within the current PRIDE year. Award winning nominations are selected based on review by a panel of community development professionals. The following 12 PRIDE communities received the STAR Award in 2005.

Almena - All Weather Rest Room – The Almena Community PRIDE sponsored the construction of a disc golf course and the renovation of the Almena City Roadside Park 2 years ago. It soon became very evident that a rest room was needed for the convenience of park users. The park is located just outside of Almena on Highway 383, a much-traveled road by truckers, as well as local traffic. Once the decision to build was approved, many volunteers were organized to help with fund raising and to assist with planning and gathering of supplies. Almena PRIDE, the Chamber of Commerce, Norton County, and the City of Almena all pitched in to cover the expense. The project required the purchasing of the supplies, coordination of equipment and building schedules, and volunteer help. The Norton Correctional Institute furnished labor to lay the blocks, build the roof, and paint the structure. The cost would have been out of our range if not for their help. The Sunflower Pioneer Power Association, PRIDE, Chamber of Commerce, and the Masonic Lodge held a free cookout for the community as thanks for all their help. The same is planned for this year. Because of rest room facilities, young people, travelers, and picnickers use the park a lot more now.

Argonia - Argonia Mart – A community survey in Argonia revealed that the lack of a grocery store, gas station, and restaurant were priority concerns of the community. Like many communities, Argonia seemed to be at an impasse when no individual stepped forward to offer to build these buildings. However, through the city/PRIDE meetings, a new approach was considered. Several community members pulled together to form the Argonia Development Company, LLC, a partnership investment group to build a gas station, grocery store, pizza parlor that they called the Argonia Mart. The project was completed at a cost of more than \$700,000 and is a successful, profitable business. It has become the coffee stop for morning community discussions and the pizza stop for dinner. It has created six new jobs for people in the town. It is an asset to other PRIDE projects – like the Argonia River Park – providing fuel and services to RV campers and the Argonia DAZE rodeo celebration. This past year the city experienced a tornado, a train wreck, and a major ice storm. In every instance, the recovery crews used Argonia Mart as their rest stop. All profits made by the Argonia Development Company, LLC are turned back into the community. The Argonia system of combining city, the PRIDE Planning group, and Argonia Development Company, LLC resources has provided exciting new potential.

Axtell - Emergency Services Building – The City of Axtell owned an old van-type ambulance. The city had decided that the next ambulance would need to be a larger, modular style unit. A new ambulance would, however, require a larger building. The fire department's trucks were stored in two, small older buildings that lacked adequate room for training and made maintenance difficult. The city applied for a Kan-STEP grant through the Kansas Department of Commerce. The Kan-STEP grant provides money for the building; if the community provides adequate match through the labor to erect the building. Axtell generated 155 volunteers donating more than 8,000 hours of labor for this project; not including the many hours of time required completing surveys and planning the building. Today, instead of a crumbling old warehouse on Main Street, Axtell has an attractive new building that houses our EMS and fire department. The ambulance and fire trucks are parked in a spacious and well-lit area. This allows access to better maintain the equipment and the space to train in any weather. The large meeting room in the building is used by several organizations in the community and provides classroom and meeting space for our EMTs and firemen. Because of this project, Axtell community benefits by having a better trained volunteer crew and better maintained ambulance and fire equipment.



Axtell Emergency Services Building

Cunningham - Murals – A large mural greets many of the thousands of travelers that drive Highway 54 each day as they pass through Cunningham. The pride of the community is evident in the art piece. The project was only possible through donations from the community, and various fund-raising projects. The PRIDE committee worked to get information about the mural to the community through the Cunningham Courier. As the mural progressed, sketches were put at the local bank and public library. Town residents were encouraged to give their ideas about the mural panels to PRIDE members. Mr. Gene Weinland was commissioned to complete the mural. The mural depicts the importance of agriculture in the history of the area from its pioneer beginnings in 1885 to the present. The mural incorporates several images of Kansas: the meadowlark, waving wheat, barbed-wire fence, oxen skull, cottonwood trees, sunflowers, and the yucca plant. It is unified with a wonderful Kansas sky. The centerpiece of the mural is the early 1900s street scene. The mural highlights our community and welcomes travelers as they pass through Cunningham.



Cunningham Mural

Fort Scott - Signage in Gunn Park – In 1910, Mr. W.C. Gunn donated additional land to an existing park on the west side of Fort Scott. He declared that it should always be used as a park. Gunn Park is a beautiful area consisting of 155 acres of wooded terrain that includes six rock or log shelter houses situated along a road winding around the park. PRIDE had previously created a map showing where each shelter house is located, but people still had difficulty finding the one they were seeking. PRIDE decided that permanent signs would solve that problem. PRIDE officials worked with a local sign painter to create a large sign of the entire park to be posted near the entrance. He also made signs showing the location of each individual shelter house. The City of Fort Scott donated the poles and installed the signs. The installations of the signs made Gunn Park much more user-friendly. Invitations to gatherings often mention that the activity will be held at, for example, Shelter House Number 5. In the past, it was difficult to know how to go straight to that particular shelter house. People, even natives, often drove around the park until they spotted familiar cars. Now the playgrounds, picnic areas, shelter houses, paddleboats, fishing, and Frisbee golf are much more readily available. PRIDE is happy to have been able to spearhead this improvement for the visitors to Gunn Park in Fort Scott.

Glasco - Corner Store Activities – Glasco Chamber PRIDE selected their “Sustaining the Heart of Main Street Through Activities at the Corner Store” project for STAR Award consideration because of the amazing work done by volunteers. Optimistic volunteers were able to look beyond the lost grocery business in the 100-year-old Historic Corner Store and to make it a center of activities for youth and senior citizens. Volunteers provided activities for children. They provided Fun Day programming and exhibits. They developed and maintained a weekly Farmers’ Market – perhaps the only one in Kansas operating year round. They shared talents and interests in the arts, conducted quilting, writing and painting workshops, and musical events. The Corner Store now provides an annual community photo exhibit with the focus on Glasco. By working together, Glasco is succeeding in maintaining a vital community environment.



Glasco Corner Store

Goff - Skeezix Farm Toys – Skeezix Farm Toys is the result of 50 years of collecting toy farm tractors. Melvin Swart, formerly of Goff, started saving his toy tractors as a child and, over the years, has collected a barnful. After his death, Melvin’s brother and Goff PRIDE member, Jerry Swart, proposed an idea to the PRIDE group to memorialize his brother by starting a public museum that would allow everyone to enjoy the collection. The museum work began with the help of PRIDE members in the community. The work started by leveling a small piece of land for the cement foundation. The frame and roof of the building were erected and Jerry and the PRIDE members wired electricity into the building. The paneling for the inside of the building coming from an old barn the PRIDE members dismantled. The members then called a workday to put the barn boards in place. Twelve members helped on one cold, rainy Saturday to get the job completed. A large shelf was erected over the front and back doors to hold larger tractors from the collection. The edging for the shelves was leftover end pieces of wood from the barn boards about 5 inches long. After the walls and the shelving were finished the cases for the tractors were moved in. The ladies of PRIDE painted the cabinets and cleaned the glass of the cases the tractors would be stored in. On April 16, 2005 an Open House was held at the museum with about 75 in attendance. PRIDE served refreshments.



Skeezix Farm Toys in Goff

Grinnell - Hometown Grocery – This year, Grinnell PRIDE has dedicated their energy to promote business and continue to keep the Hometown Grocery Store a viable business. The store has struggled for some time and is an essential part of the small community. The main goal for PRIDE this year will be to help keep a community-owned grocery store open in this rural area. Fund-raisers were organized this year to benefit the grocery store and included a soup supper, lasagna supper, potato bar, and raffle. The money raised will be put toward a face-lift for the store including upkeep, repair, paint, and a new awning to update the appearance. This project has involved the whole community of Grinnell where everyone is a member of PRIDE. This is because community members feel it is important to take pride in their community. PRIDE seniors were involved in making a quilt for the raffle, PRIDE youth collected surveys and many PRIDE members volunteered their time and services for the fund-raisers. PRIDE also delivers noon meals, now offered at the store to the elderly. This project impacted the community by making each member more aware of the business in our small community. With the improvements made both inside and out, the store has begun to order noon meals and other needed products and services. Community members have responded by purchasing more products at the store, realizing the importance of keeping their dollars local.



Grinnell Hometown Grocery

Melvern - City Park Playground and Rest Rooms – Melvern PRIDE determined several months ago that a new city playground and public rest room facility was priority. PRIDE worked with the city to lay the groundwork for the project. They applied to “The Jones Fund” for a grant. This fund has helped many local communities. While waiting to hear from “The Jones Fund,” PRIDE held several meetings to discuss the needs and design for the playground area. Visits to various suppliers were made to identify the specific desires of the community. Once PRIDE found out that they had been awarded the grant, they had to raise \$25,000 for the local share of the grant. Fund-raisers were held and donations were accepted to meet the goal. People in the community pitched in to help with the dirt work, plumbing, electrical and cement work. Volunteers installed all of the playground equipment and hooked up the prefabricated rest rooms. The Rusty Bucket Garden Club donated both money and time to purchase and plant shrubs and flowers when the park was completed.



Melvorn City Park

Park City - Chisholm Trail Elementary School – Chisholm Trail Elementary School in Park City, Kansas faced low-test scores and poor community support. Principal Elbert McGhee came to Park City PRIDE for help, telling members that individual tutoring was the most reliable way to raise the scores quickly. PRIDE members went into action. PRIDE member Carol Flower made curtains to hide the plumbing facilities in old locker rooms, which were the only rooms available for tutoring. Dee Stuart brought in plants and new signs to brighten the entryways. Carol energized PRIDE and community members to provide much needed school supplies with a “Stuff the Bus for Chisholm Trail” drive, filling a small school bus in one day. Membership in PTO was encouraged with door prizes and childcare provided by PRIDE for the first meeting of the year. PRIDE members served on the Site Council. They manned recruitment tables at enrollment, talking to parents and grandparents about the rewards of tutoring. They went into the community, recruiting younger and older tutors, even recruiting Wichita Thunder hockey players. Sixty students were tutored once a week in that first year. As community members came into the school to tutor, they started to see a difference in the attitudes of the teachers and students. And when the test scores came in, they showed a dramatic 15+ percent improvement in reading, writing, and math across the board for the fifth graders. All in one year! In 2004-2005, the number of tutors is up and now 75 students are participating. Now there are two classrooms set aside for the tutoring. The attitude of the community toward the school has changed – residents have bought into it with their time and energy. When volunteers are needed, residents are willing to step forward. The local Chevrolet dealer is even recruiting employees as tutors, paying them for the hour they volunteer once a week. There is a new pride in the school – thanks to Park City PRIDE!

Potwin - Pride Youth Organization – The 2004 community of excellence evaluators encouraged Potwin to consider involving youth in leadership, including involving them in planning meetings and providing opportunities for leadership. In October, PRIDE member Melvina Jones attended a listening session by Kansas Campus Compact at Butler County Community College to explore the idea of linking college-aged students with local youth groups. After inviting a BCCC representative to a PRIDE meeting, Potwin PRIDE began to organize a youth group with the help of the college. It started with pizza, team building, and sharing the PRIDE mission and vision. The vision took fire, and the PRIDE youth group started to look for ways they could help in the community. Two adults volunteered to work with the youth group and three youth volunteered for the Plant-A-Row for the Hungry garden committee. In March, eight youth elected their own officers and made a list of projects they wanted to do besides helping with the ones already planned by the adults. Fourteen youth helped plant 90 pounds of potatoes in the garden. Eleven youth helped take out the PRIDE surveys all over town and pick them up. Seventeen youth helped with the Adopt-A-Highway clean up and cleaned up around town. PRIDE furnished a pizza dinner after the clean-up. In April the youth had their own meeting and planned their first project. They set a workday for to clean up King Park. Seventeen youth and 4 adults scraped and painted the basketball goal post, swing set poles, BBQ grills, and the inside of the shelter. The city furnished the paint for the project. They fixed the basketball backboard and raked up a pickup load of sticks. Youth PRIDE representatives attended the PRIDE meeting in April to explore a Neighborhood Watch program. Starting a PRIDE youth group has led to the largest numbers of youth and young adults involvement in Potwin PRIDE.



Potwin Youth

Stockton - Old Tire Disposal – “Take Stock in Stockton” – the Stockton PRIDE program – sponsored an Old Tire Collection and Disposal project in July 2004. The purpose was to aid in cleaning-up yard clutter and to eliminate mosquito breeding places. Projects sponsors had expected to gather 400 to 500 old tires during the 5-day effort. However, public response was almost overwhelming, as nearly 2,000 old tires were collected – nearly four per person! There were so many tires it required three trips by the recycler to haul them all away! The project allowed a couple of local businesses to dispose of accumulated old tires at a significant cost savings. While the cost to the city greatly exceeded the budget estimate, it was still preferable to spraying that might have been needed to prevent an outbreak of West Nile Virus. The recycling efforts not only eliminated a potential health issue, it created an immediate, visible impact as PRIDE maintains a clutter-free Stockton.



Stockton Used Tire Collection

2005 Community of Excellence Award Recipients

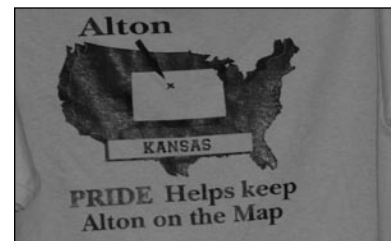
The Community of Excellence Award is awarded to communities that are following a community improvement process that is inclusive, planned, and proven successful. Communities interested in participating in an evaluation process for the Community of Excellence recognition must request evaluation through the state PRIDE office. Kansas PRIDE then assembles and coordinates teams of community development professionals to visit and evaluate the communities. While every Kansas PRIDE community identifies their own projects, priorities, and work; community development practitioners will agree that community development process must build on the following structural elements to achieve successful, sustainable results.

- Effective organizational structure
- Assessment of the local situation and wishes of the community
- Creative utilization of local and external resources
- Successful completion of projects
- Shared leadership and shared recognition for success
- Open meetings and broad citizen involvement
- Developed plans for community improvement
- Established partnerships and collaborative efforts

The following communities were visited and evaluated in the spring of 2005, and have been selected by the evaluation teams to receive the Community of Excellence Award to recognize their success.

Almena – Located in Norton County in the northwest corner of the state, Almena is a rural Kansas community with a knack for collaboration. The Almena Community PRIDE has worked diligently since 1992 to help align partnerships of organizations and individuals to work on community projects. Community of Excellence evaluators commented that there was very good citywide involvement and representation in Almena. The people of Almena seem to be able to pull together to work on projects. In the last few years, Almena has focused on a park at the entrance to the community. They have developed walking trails, a disc golf course, and just this year, installed a public rest room in the park. With the recent additional involvement of a Junior PRIDE, Almena PRIDE remains optimistic, persistent, and focused on making Almena an excellent place to live!

Alton – One evaluator commented, “If it weren’t for PRIDE, it wouldn’t happen in Alton!” Another evaluator commented that Alton is the most organized community they have ever visited! It may have been the Alton Chocolate Festival, or the Ladies Night Out, or the Senior Easter Egg Hunt, or one of the other events on the page-long list of events that Alton PRIDE annually hosts that impressed the evaluators. “They are a bumble bee community,” an evaluator commented. When asked what they meant by that, they responded, “They say the bumble bee shouldn’t be able to fly, but it does. Alton is a small community that is flying too! Alton PRIDE provides a social network for the community that is just amazing.” By using a process that works, Alton PRIDE has been making a difference in the lives of everyone in Alton for 20 years!



Alton

Argonia – Argonia PRIDE and the City of Argonia are sometimes difficult to distinguish. The Argonia PRIDE group meets regularly in the city hall in an open community meeting. The community brings up ideas and issues, and the group takes action. Sometimes the response is from individuals, sometimes as organizations, and on big projects, the community organizations all pull together to accomplish their goals. A recent example is the limited liability corporation formed in response to the community needs brought forward from a PRIDE survey (see PRIDE STAR awards for more details on the Argonia Mart). Whether it is an event, celebration, property improvement, or building project, the Argonia PRIDE group is a great example of collaborative community improvement. “Because the community is willing to tackle major projects, the impact, particularly from a long term perspective, is impressive” commented an evaluator. Through hard work and shared investment in their future, Argonia has earned a Community of Excellence designation!



Argonia Mart

Cunningham – Located in south-central Kansas, Cunningham PRIDE understands the importance of history and place. Kansas PRIDE evaluators commented that the Cunningham PRIDE provides very good ongoing projects to serve the community, and has been involved in some larger-scale projects like the community grocery, the walking trails, and playground equipment in the community park. This year, the PRIDE group played a central role in creating a mural along the highway that captures aspects of the local history, provides artwork within the community, and gives a positive first impression to those entering the community. A community of excellence evaluator reflected, “Their projects have lead to the community viewing PRIDE as a “rock.” It has made the community a better place to live – the grocery store and clinic both were direct results of PRIDE activities.”

Eskridge – Eskridge PRIDE is providing an opportunity for community dialogue and goal setting. Eskridge PRIDE has been a catalyst for addressing community issues. When methamphetamine production was suspected in the area, for example, the PRIDE group invited the Highway Patrol and Kansas Bureau of Investigation to town for “Community Awareness” training. The elevated awareness of community members and law enforcement was enough to curb the suspicious behavior! The PRIDE group also works hard to make sure all organizations and groups of people in Eskridge have an opportunity to get involved in community improvement. The PRIDE group coordinates celebrations and events and has done extensive work in the community parks. Eskridge PRIDE is pulling together to assertively pursue community improvement!



Eskridge

Goff – Goff PRIDE has a reputation for getting things done. One Kansas PRIDE community evaluator commented, “People around Goff come to the PRIDE group when they need something done.” An example of this is the Skeezix Toy Museum project Goff finished this year (see STAR awards for more information). The PRIDE group helped build a display building for a sizeable toy tractor display that had been recently been inherited within the community. But PRIDE does so much more for the community of Goff. Goff PRIDE established and oversees a community food pantry, community fitness center, and was a driving force in making improvements at the fire station. Goff PRIDE is a community improvement effort that gets things done!

Grinnell – A key aspect of a successful PRIDE community is listening to the needs of the community and designing projects that meet those needs. Grinnell PRIDE is a great example of why this is so important. Grinnell follows a pattern of assessing community needs, setting goals, doing projects, and then reassessing the community needs. A great example of this is the Grinnell Hometown Grocery. The cooperative grocery store was established after the community expressed the importance of having a grocery store. Grinnell PRIDE was a key player in helping to pay off the \$75,000 mortgage. When the PRIDE group surveyed the needs of the community again, they found there were ways that the store could improve its service. Grinnell PRIDE raised \$2,500 for paint and repairs of the building and helped the grocery expand the services that they offer. Through their inclusive and community wide approach, Grinnell is showing just how important and effective community engagement can be!

Nearly 75,000 hours of volunteer activity was invested in community improvement through Kansas PRIDE in this program year.

Highland – Highland PRIDE has adopted the motto, “Looking ahead is a great way to keep from falling behind.” The PRIDE group works hard to stay ahead of the needs in the community. “Highland PRIDE is very organized and follows a good process,” commented a community of excellence evaluator. The PRIDE group works with the city staff to coordinate citywide clean up projects, coordinate fund-raisers, recognize volunteers, and develop creative projects to improve life in the community. This is in addition to ongoing community services they oversee like their community food pantry. Because of their ongoing success with participation and their continuous goal setting to improve the quality of life and to meet community needs, Highland demonstrates excellence through their PRIDE!

According to the 2004 valuation of volunteer time by the Independent Sector, that is worth \$1,316,250.00 of volunteer time!

Lakin – Lakin PRIDE is following a very inclusive planning process. The PRIDE group advertised and facilitated a survey followed by a public planning meeting. Ideas resulting from community visioning and planning sessions were prioritized, and projects were divided among project teams. The teams have been working diligently on the community priorities, and each success seems to feed more energy back into the community. The PRIDE evaluators were impressed with the diversity of involvement and energy from the project team focused on community marketing. “PRIDE seems to be the glue to the community” an evaluator wrote. Lakin has strong involvement from schools, area business, the city, and the K-State Research and Extension County office. Lakin is modeling an inclusive, active, community improvement initiative.

Lenora – Lenora PRIDE in a word is persistence. Grant writing is not always easy, however it can be a learning experience. Lenora PRIDE did not get a Kansas Community Development Block Grant funds with the first proposal. Rather than give up, they asked what they could do better, did their homework, and re-submitted a proposal the following year. Again, they did not receive a grant. Once more they asked what they could improve on and resubmitted it again a third year. Their persistence and continuous improvement paid off with a \$240,000 grant for a community center and public library. Lenora’s commitment to community, willingness to learn, and tenacity to “try, try again” is a great testimony to their commitment to excellence.

Lucas – Lucas is a thriving community. Current events are displayed on the sign on Main Street, and first run movies are featured in the volunteer-staffed community theater. Community pride is evident in the well-cared-for lawns and homes, and there is a sense of energy and creativity in the town. The Lucas Chamber PRIDE is not afraid to tackle big projects. After rebuilding a community theater, they are now working on a theater addition with the help of a Kan-STEP grant through the Kansas Department of Commerce. Celebrations, park improvements, business promotion, and tourism are all aspects of ongoing PRIDE work. Building on the vision to become an artistic center has helped provide focus to their growth. Lucas has done a great job of focusing on its priorities, and successfully working to achieve them!



Lucas Youth

Melvern – When assessing a community, Kansas PRIDE encourages groups to look at the physical, social, and economic dimensions of community improvement. Melvern PRIDE quickly established itself as more than a one-dimension community improvement group! PRIDE evaluators commented on the enthusiasm and support of the whole community as they have mobilized to make improvements. Melvern PRIDE has rebuilt the park on main (see 2005 STAR Award), built a community center, wellness center, and continues to work on a variety of projects for community improvement. PRIDE hosts “Meet the Candidate” meetings, community dinners, and Kansas Humanities speakers. Always looking to improve the social, physical, and economic aspects of life, Melvern PRIDE demonstrates excellence!

Mount Hope – Mount Hope PRIDE is demonstrating what a caring community looks like. Whether it is through coordinating the community youth recreation program, coordinating Heartland share, helping out with blood drives, ticket sales, or day care, the Mount Hope PRIDE is building a strong sense of community. This year the PRIDE group accepted a grant from the Community Resource Program that helped them to host clinics, trainings, and festivals that provided community fun and opportunities to learn. Bike maintenance, fishing clinics, calligraphy, and mom’s night out were just some of the events. One evaluator noted, “Mount Hope has a clear set of goals established by the city, and the PRIDE group works hard to enhance these goals.” Mount Hope PRIDE is an organized group of volunteers that have stepped forward to make a positive impact in the community.

Through local fund-raisers, Kansas PRIDE communities raised more than \$900,000 to reinvest for the betterment of their communities in the 2005 Program Year.

Park City – Park City PRIDE understands successful community improvement process, and it seems that no matter what they apply it to, it has fantastic results. In addition to ongoing social programs, arts and entertainment, recognitions, and social events in Park City, the group is frequently asked to help other organizations out as well. They assist the school recruit volunteers for the PTA and for recruit tutors (see STAR awards). They annually “Stuff the Bus” with food supplies for the hungry and they are always lending a helping hand to any individual or group that asks assistance. In addition, they plan and implement their own efforts in creative ways. This year the PRIDE group hosted a “Texas Hold-em” poker tournament, and was able to raise \$25,000 to purchase additional equipment for the Park City youth skate park. Park City PRIDE has a strong, hard-earned history of success, and they continue to demonstrate what a successful community improvement initiative can achieve!

Potwin – An attitude of continuous improvement permeates Potwin PRIDE. A community evaluator commented, “There is a clear sense and willingness for community members to come together to address a community need. The local PRIDE program has played the catalyst role in creating this collaboration.” The PRIDE group evaluates, makes modifications, and continues to grow larger and stronger. Their change to include youth in planning and leadership is a great example of this. Through the Community of Excellence evaluation process in 2004, Potwin received feedback that they might want to increase youth involvement through leadership opportunities, not just service opportunities. Potwin PRIDE already recognized the value of engaging youth and began to look at ways that the Potwin PRIDE group could structure a higher level of youth involvement (See STAR awards for more detail). It was their commitment to improvement, along with their success in involving others, their targeted and highly successful projects, and their great way of documenting their success that made Potwin PRIDE an easy choice for the Community of Excellence recognition.

Rossville – One aspect of the community of excellence evaluation is “broad citizen involvement.” In Rossville, the involvement is so pervasive, it is often difficult to distinguish what is work is PRIDE and what is city, church, youth, school or other group. Rossville PRIDE is an excellent example of city staff, community organizations, and citizens working with shared goals. This year PRIDE developed the Rossville web site as a result of the Extreme Web Site Makeover with Kansas PRIDE and CivicPLUS. PRIDE engaged city, community groups, and school groups to assist with fund-raising and support efforts for a new city pool, and they have many project groups involved in community improvement projects. The decision-making process is shared, the work on the projects is shared, the results of the projects are shared, and the credit for making Rossville a better community is shared. Rossville shares leadership, and deserves recognition for their excellent efforts to create an inclusive, engaged community!

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The Kansas PRIDE Program gratefully acknowledges the contributions of our partners and sponsors whose generosity supports the efforts to build better communities through the training and recognition opportunities of the PRIDE program.

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