

Kansas PRIDE Review



2004

Building Better Communities



Aquila

Larissa Long
Manager
External Affairs - Kansas

110 East 9th St.
Lawrence, KS 66044
Tel 785-832-3918
Fax 785-832-3901
Cell 785-331-5262
larissa.long@aquila.com

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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. Your collaborative efforts on projects and initiatives, coupled with creativity and enthusiasm, led to very significant outcomes!

Member communities submitting projects for award consideration were evaluated in 2004 by teams of community development professionals. PRIDE was pleased to present a record number of awards at the annual PRIDE Day Conference banquet in Salina on November 6, 2004. Nineteen Community of Excellence Awards and seventeen Star Awards were presented! In addition, youth from eleven communities were recognized for their service and leadership. It was an evening of recognition and celebration!

Change is always difficult – and this year it impacted our PRIDE staff. As you know, Beverly Wilhelm retired in June, following 18 years as the program's coordinator. Four weeks later, Jo Koppes, our office professional, left for a position in her hometown. We appreciate the years they gave to PRIDE and offer our best wishes as they embark on new paths.

Ruth Smerchek, the new Program Manager, brings many skills and talents to the position. In addition to her PRIDE duties, she'll continue to serve as the program manager for the "From the Land of Kansas" trademark program. She's also uniquely qualified for the position – she was active in PRIDE in Sharon Springs in the early 1980s! I know you'll enjoy working with Ruth and Mary Mathiot, our new Office Professional.

I also want to personally thank Jeanne Stinson and Dan Kahl for their support during the staff changes. They took on extra responsibilities during that period and I know it wasn't always easy to keep up with the additional workload, but they handled it in a very professional manner.

And so, as PRIDE enters its 35th year, I look forward to continued 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
2004 Board Chairperson
Kansas PRIDE, Inc.

Board of Directors

Members of the 2003-2004 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 Extensions and the Kansas Department of Commerce. The mission of the Board of Directors is to provide overall leadership and raise funds for the recognition of outstanding community achievement through the Kansas PRIDE program.

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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 partnership of private-sector companies and associations, is the third collaborative partner. Kansas PRIDE, Inc. provides support for community recognition. Through this approach, the Kansas PRIDE program is able to effectively deliver services and resources to PRIDE communities.

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 soon community groups are starting to cooperate on project goals. PRIDE assists with resource identification and planning, and helps to recognize those communities that are successful in creating better places to live!

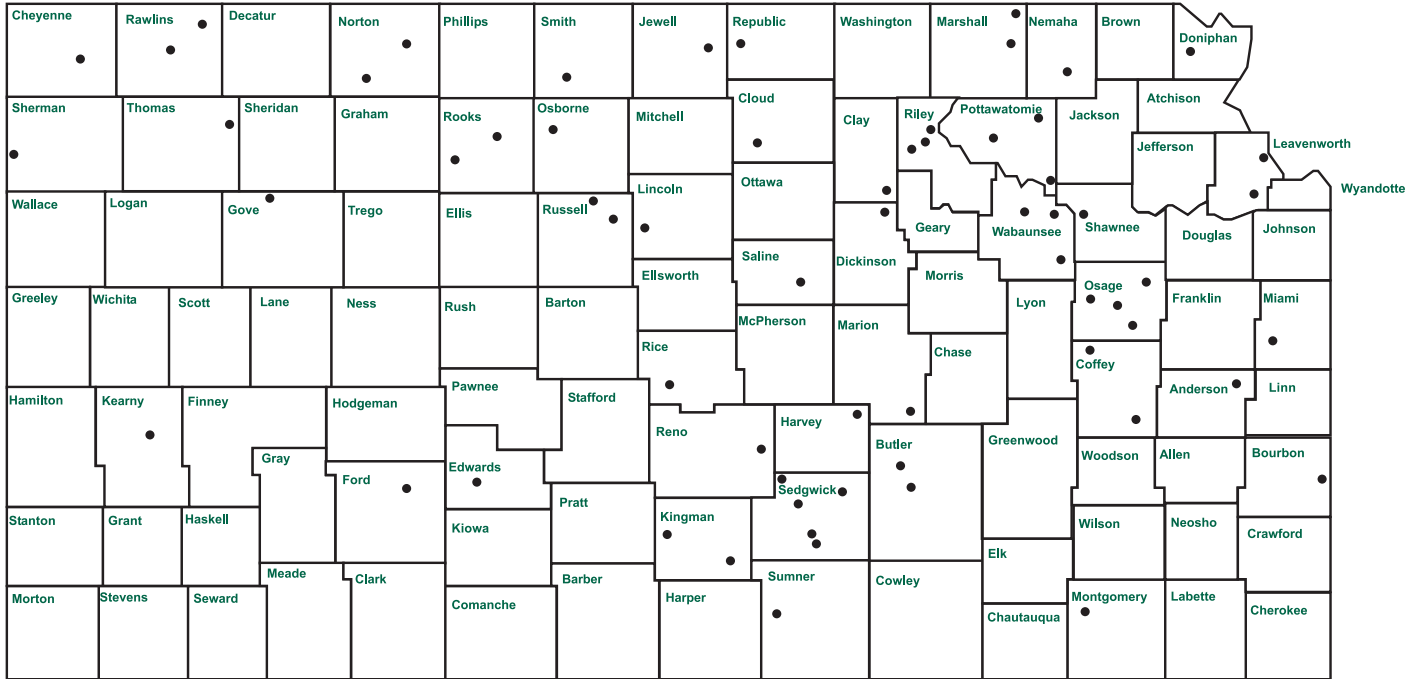
Benefits of Participating in PRIDE

- ◆ 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

PRIDE Impacts Communities

In the 2003-2004 PRIDE year, 64 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.

2004 PRIDE Communities



(Populations and county shown in parenthesis)

Alden (165) RC	Eskridge (582) WB	Lebo (955) CF	Overbrook (974) OS
Almena (461) NT	Formoso (122) JW	Lenora (300) NT	Palco (244) RO
Alton (114) OB	Fort Scott (8,261) BB	Leonardville (375) RL	Park City (5,944) SG
Argonia (524) SU	Gaylord (141) SM	LeRoy (588) CF	Paxico (210) WB
Assaria (447) SA	Glasco (520) CD	Lucas (427) RS	Potwin (449) BU
Atwood (1,258) RA	Goff (177) NM	Luray (197) RS	Randolph (168) RL
Axtell (439) MS	Greeley (330) AN	Lyndon (1,038) OS	Rexford (156) TH
Basehor (2,324) LV	Grinnell (323) GO	Maize (1,915) SG	Rossville (1,009) SN
Beattie (273) MS	Haven (1,172) RN	McFarland (266) WB	Spearville (817) FO
Bird City (472) CN	Haysville (9,077) SG	Melvorn (433) OS	St. Marys (2,221) PT
Burns (271) MN	Herndon (146) RA	Mount Hope (829) SG	Stockton (1,535) RO
Chapman (1,233) DK	Highland (983) DP	Norwich (543) KM	Sylvan Grove (319) LC
Clearwater (2,173) SG	Kanorado (240) SH	Olsburg (189) RL	Towanda (1,319) BU
Courtland (322) RP	Kinsley (1,592) ED	Onaga (697) PT	Wakefield (841) CY
Cunningham (504) KM	Lakin (2,336) KE	Osage City (3,043) OS	Walton (287) HV
Elk City (301) MG	Lansing (9,430) LV	Osawatomie (4,635) MI	Westmoreland (628) PT

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 communities that engage youth notice multiple benefits, including youth leadership and life skills development, and the impact of their service to the community. The Kansas PRIDE program recognizes the outstanding efforts of youth involved in community improvement through the PRIDE Youth Recognition Awards. Nominations were sought from communities for the following categories: the PRIDE Youth Leadership Award and the PRIDE Youth Community Service Award.

PRIDE Youth Leadership Awards

The Youth Leadership Award recognizes individuals that 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 Youth Leadership Award.

Crystal Buck (Lansing) Crystal is a doer! She takes an active role in making things happen for her school, community and church. One of her primary interests has been as a volunteer teacher for G.E.D. classes at the Wyandotte County Correctional Facility. Crystal was home schooled, so it took great courage to walk into a room of youth who have been convicted of varying illegal activities from theft to drugs and have been removed from public schools. In visiting with her students, she learned of some of the problems they had encountered at public schools, and when the opportunity came — she felt it was her responsibility to be the voice of the unheard students. She spoke before the Wyandotte Board of Education and offered solutions to improve the school system and the treatment of students within it. Without a doubt, Crystal has made a great impact on the youth in her community, and she has not hesitated to take on tough jobs. It is evident that those she touches have a great appreciation for her willingness to take hold and lead.



Highland PRIDE

Nicholas McKenzie (Rossville) In the spring of 2003 the Rossville Swimming Pool Taskforce was formed to assist the City of Rossville in its endeavor to build a swimming pool. The idea had been talked about since the 1960s, but no organized effort had been undertaken. Nicholas McKenzie was appointed by the mayor to serve on the taskforce. Nicholas decided it would be a great idea to collect aluminum cans to raise funds. He immediately put together an organized effort to collect cans. He and his friends developed a weekly pick-up schedule and developed flyers to inform the community of their project. His grandfather donates a truck every now and then so the cans can be delivered to Topeka. Their first check totaled \$413.63 and their contribution has grown to \$3,900 as of April 30. Nicholas's involvement has been instrumental in getting other youth involved, and in helping the community at large see how dedicated young people are in helping to make this a reality.

Honorable Mention

Brandy Arbogast (Fort Scott) Brandy has been involved with 25 projects this year past school year — while maintaining her 3.5 grade point average. Brandy has served meals-on-wheels, worked a bloodmobile, walked nine miles for Multiple Sclerosis, worked on Thanksgiving crafts for nursing homes, been a part of the adopted grandparents Christmas party and gift exchange, raised money for PRIDE, worked for youth with Santa's workshop, served as Halloween parade judge, created valentine crafts, and many other projects. Brandy believes in the PRIDE Motto: "PRIDE works when we do."

"PRIDE works when we do." — Brandy Arbogast, Leadership Award Recipient

Robert Ostmeyer (Grinnell) Robert's leadership style may be best described as being just like a small community. He works away at several small projects — taking incremental steps to help achieve community goals. Robert has made computer presentations for Grinnell PRIDE at home and at PRIDE Day, and he works on the annual Easter egg hunt. In addition he is active with National Honor Society, his church and 4-H. His 4-H experience has given him the opportunity to teach rocketry to youth for the last several years including as a camp counselor at the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson. Robert also was the youngest person to enroll in Leadership Gove County II course offered by K-State Research and Extension. Robert is continually improving in his leadership abilities.

Youth Community Service Awards

Teaching our youth the importance of community service may very well be the way our nation can recapture the spirit of our communities that is so vital to its future. The Youth Community Service Award provides a unique opportunity for young people to be recognized for volunteer service. The award is presented to youth who have significantly contributed to local community betterment efforts. PRIDE would like to recognize the following youth for their outstanding community service.

Tiffany Zimmerman (Lansing) Tiffany is a very ambitious young lady who is involved in many community service activities such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Church, Girl Scouts, Special Olympics and SADD. This year, Tiffany came up with the idea of creating a fashion show to help raise money for the grandparents of two-year old Daniellye, whose parents were killed in an auto accident. As a result of the planning and preparation, the show was a fabulous success and raised over \$800, all of which was given for Daniellye's needs. According to Tiffany, "The most rewarding part of the night was seeing the look on Daniellye's grandmother's face. She was overjoyed to know that someone in the community cared this much to help her grandchild."

Lindsay Turner (Norwich) Lindsay has been instrumental in many community service activities that have needed youth involvement. Her enthusiasm and eagerness has helped her make a difference in Norwich. She has stepped forward to help raise funds for a community supported grocery store; she volunteered 20 hours of cleaning and painting to help turn the old city library into a meeting place for 4-H youth. She has also helped with St. Patrick's decorations and Christmas cards for the Care Center residents. She has assisted in preparing candy sacks for Norwich businesses and hosted an open house last Halloween night at the 4-H building. Her commitment and attitude towards community service has allowed her to make a difference for others in the community, regardless of what their age.

Honorable Mention

Andrew Mense (Grinnell) Andrew has given more than 300 hours of service to Grinnell through various activities from community clean up to presentations at State PRIDE day to 4-H president. He mows the Orion cemetery, around the Grinnell Welcome signs and works at the community owned grocery store. He serves as a volunteer for the Fall Festival, participates if Family Nights, takes care of the Community bulletin board and is in National Honor Society. Andrew is one of those people that can be counted on to pitch in for the benefit of the community and has done a great deal to improve Grinnell!

Eric Simmons (Highland) Members of the Highland Youth PRIDE organization unanimously nominated Eric for this recognition due to his community service. Eric is eager to serve whenever or wherever the need is apparent. He has helped feed the homeless, mowed lawns and shoveled snow for the elderly, plays his saxophone to entertain residents in the nursing home, helped pack care boxes for troops from Highland who are stationed in Iraq, helps with Vacation Bible School and provides other services from decorating pots on Main Street to weeding in the park. The community and many citizens have benefited from his inspirational involvement in community projects.

Brett Eakin (Rossville) Brett's zest for community involvement has included getting school groups to become involved in local activities. Since being elected as President of the school's Future Business Leaders of America, Brett has pushed an already impressive FBLA community involvement even further. Brett has also been influential in starting free computer classes for local residents, being involved in city beautification projects, designing PowerPoint presentations for various groups, and volunteering at the city's local access channel. As the old adage goes — actions speak louder than words!

Zac Miller (Almena) As a sophomore, Zac was working to help improve his small community of Almena. Zac volunteered by mowing grass, scooping snow, and by working hard at the Sunflower Pioneer Power Association's annual Power Show. Zac also worked with the Chamber of Commerce to help clean out an older building, thus improving the appearance of Main Street, and helped with putting up Christmas lights. When young people are willing to help, it encourages people of all ages to do the same! It is through the efforts of Zac and other young people like him that community organizations, and indeed the community itself will improve.

Erin McHenry (Argonia) Not only has Erin been on the academic honor roll every year in high school, but she is diligent in her service to community as well. She is involved in "BIGS," a group that mentors younger children. The youngsters who participate are greatly enriched by having a high school mentor. In addition, Erin serves on the Site Base Council, a group of youth that serve as an advisory council to school officials. As a member of KAY Club Erin has worked on cleaning up around the school and community and has helped spruce up playground equipment for the children of the community. She also works hard at assisting with the community-recycling program and gives time every month for this cause, which really makes a difference in the quality of life in Argonia.

STAR Award Recipients

Each year the PRIDE program recognizes outstanding community projects that show community support, citizen involvement, and that enhance the quality of life in Kansas. To achieve this designation, a community must nominate an outstanding project they completed within the current PRIDE year. Award-winning nominations are selected based upon review by a panel of community development professionals. Winning projects address an existing community need with a creative or appropriate project solution, and show broad community support and participation the project. The following 17 communities received the STAR Award for 2003 projects.

Almena – Three years ago on New Year's Eve, the Almena grocery store burned and destroyed the Christmas lights that were still up. The following Christmas, with the exception of a few aged candle decorations, the streets were dark. It seemed like the Grinch had stolen Christmas! In 2003, Almena PRIDE and other community organizations pulled together to hold raffles, barbeques, and pancake suppers to raise funds to repair and make new decorations. Lights were purchased, and older decorations were repaired, repainted and hung. The holiday spirit caught on as homes and businesses were decorated with lights and large wooden cutouts, and citizens donated items and Christmas trees. Christmas was back in Almena again!

Alton – “We chose to focus on our youth because they are our future leaders,” an Alton leader stated. This small rural community has no city recreation funds to provide youth services. Alton PRIDE addressed the situation by engaging youth, parents, community groups, local business, and the city to “focus on youth.” A year of activities included entertainment, recreation, and celebrations developed for youth of all ages! In addition to youth contests, reading programs, and organized sporting events, the younger children enjoyed parades and visits from such celebrities as Santa, “Lighting Jack” the Nex-tech bunny, and even Smokey Bear! PRIDE members worked with the youth to ensure the events were not only successful, but also fun for the whole community!

Axtell – Everyone agreed that Axtell needed a restaurant and a community gathering place, and they were willing to invest their time and talents to make it a reality. Axtell PRIDE organized and developed a strategic plan of action that sparked the Axtell Economic Development Corporation. With incredible efficiency, a restaurant building was designed for the downtown, money was raised, and ground was broken. Community members accepted the invitation to work on the project. Local volunteers built the building, finished the interior, and volunteered as cook and wait staff. The business known as ACE's (for Axtell Community Effort) opened in May 2003. ACE's now has a paid manager and is fully operational for meals, meetings, and community gatherings.

Burns – Not unlike many other small communities, Burns had its share of vacant buildings and deserted lots in the central business district. But change came quickly in Burns. The city and citizens working through Burns PRIDE began working on creating the kind of downtown that attracts weekend visitors to shop and relax. The plan of action involved developing a park where a dilapidated building stood. Volunteers did everything from demolition and clean up, improving sidewalks and laying sod, to constructing a gazebo and covered porch. The community donated hundreds of volunteer hours to create The PRIDE Corner Park. The area is an attractive center with brick walks, grassy areas, and a sheltered “storefront” where a visitor can relax and hear a concert on Friday night!

Clearwater – For a number of years there had been discussion in Clearwater about the need for updating the entrances to the community. Over time, many signs had been put up with very little direction and no planning; the result was a cluttered appearance. The Clearwater PRIDE/ Economic Development Committee, under the Chamber of Commerce, initiated conversations with individuals and organizations of Clearwater to form a sign task force to address the issue. Local artists designed the limestone sign and landscape designs. Funds were raised through a letter writing campaign to individuals and businesses and by placing collection cans in various businesses. The beautiful new Welcome to Clearwater sign provides a great first impression of the community, and demonstrates what is possible through good leadership and teamwork.



Courtland – Cities including Kansas City, Wichita, Courtland, Topeka, and Salina were recipients of computer equipment from The Beaumont Foundation of America in 2002. While Courtland is only a fraction of the population of these other communities, they would be quick to say, “Community is more an issue of quality, not just quantity!” Courtland was quick to respond to write a quality proposal for the

computer equipment, and now pursues the goal of having every resident in Courtland become computer literate. Through the joint efforts between the Courtland Community Library, Pike Valley School District and Courtland PRIDE, free computer classes are now offered on the new wireless laptop computers. Classes are taught by local PRIDE volunteers, which include students from Pike Valley Jr. High and High Schools.

Cunningham – One look at Rouse Park and community pride is immediately visible; with its swimming pool, sports fields, shelter houses and playgrounds surrounded by winding walking paths. In 2002, PRIDE developed a plan to add Victorian style lamps to the tree-lined walking path. The project was completed with donations from the community and the support of local businesses and other local organizations. Twenty lights, each with a granite plaque inlaid in the base in honor or memory of a loved one, have been installed. The project was completed in April of 2004, adding beauty and safe lighting to the city park. It was a PRIDE project, but a community accomplishment.

Glasco – Glasco Chamber/PRIDE understands the value of providing meaningful activities for youth, of expanding opportunities to experience the arts, and of retaining the local history of the area. This STAR project does all of the above! The PRIDE Youth Committee coordinated and funded the opportunity for an artist-in-residence to work with Glasco youth to interpret local history and depict the stories in a mural. Students were introduced to the dramatic story of John and Jeanette Hillhouse who were among the first to settle along the Solomon River near what is now Glasco. Working together the artist and four classes of students studied the historical writings, and captured key ideas about Hillhouse's move from Scotland to the Solomon Valley by creating a stunning four-panel mural. The mural is installed at the Historic Corner Store with an interpretive panel, making the art and history permanently available to the public.

Goff – Due to the poor physical condition of the old community center building, the city council and PRIDE worked to plan and build a new one! With the assistance of a Department of Commerce, Kan-Step program award, Goff received \$325,000 to help construct a new 40 X 70 foot building. Forty percent of the grant was matched by volunteer labor, which included everything from providing meal, snacks or drinks to volunteer laborers, to people who volunteered their tools and trades, such as bulldozers, and plumbing. Towns people and area farmers worked together. Youth of the community contributed by keeping track of the tools, sweeping, and carrying materials. Today Goff celebrates a community center that provides a place for meeting, community and family gatherings and also a storm shelter that will house 70 people. This project really brought the citizens together as team!



Greeley – Responding to survey recommendations from community residents to improve the condition of the City Park, Greeley PRIDE started the “Pass the Time in Our Park” project. The community held fundraisers ranging from bake sales to an honor banquet to generate funds needed for the improvements. Volunteers donated items for the sales, and worked to design and work in the park. The group was able to purchase all the supplies necessary for the park beautification project, and was even able to incorporate the VFW memorial made from the old community well. Landscaping, benches, and plantings in the park have created a pleasant place to “Pass the Time.”

Grinnell – There is only one chance to make a first impression. Keeping up with signs that lead into a rural community can be a challenge, but important, as they are the first indicator of the pride a community has in itself. Grinnell PRIDE initiated a sign update project. Community groups, the school, and youth were involved in planning, fundraisers, and providing labor for the project. When the interstate signs were finished, the PRIDE signs at the entrance of Grinnell were next. Using the motto “United with PRIDE” an entrance sign was created for PRIDE and other organizations, and represents the collaborative work that Grinnell does so well. The signs are constructed in concrete and cast iron to withstand the western Kansas weather. Because of the signage ownership, the success of this project required the partnerships and cooperation of all the organizations in Grinnell.

Highland – After listening to troops in Iraq being interviewed on what most helped them to keep up their moral; the answer of “just knowing we are supported back home” was enough to get Highland PRIDE moving. They encouraged citizens of Highland and all of Doniphan County to be a part of the “Support our Troops” project. Every troop member from Doniphan County serving in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan will receive a care package with food, personal hygiene items, and reading material. Included are letters and cards of encouragement to sustain them through their time of combat. Youngsters made pictures and wrote letters as well. This project, much appreciated by the troops and their families, brought the citizens of the Highland community and Doniphan County residents together for a wonderful cause.

Mount Hope – Two years ago Mount Hope PRIDE began an incremental process of improving an existing, but long neglected park and park building, to make the park a safe family-friendly gathering place for the community. During the first year, windows were replaced and new donated siding was added to the park building. Work also began on repairing playground equipment and landscaping projects. In 2003 air conditioning and heating units were updated and more equipment was renovated or replaced. PRIDE Tree Kids added trees to the park. Encouraged by the progress, the City Maintenance staff remodeled the interior of the park building, painted walls, replaced doors and added a new wood-beam support system. The building was completed in April, 2004, and park usage has sky-rocketed. The park and its upgraded building are now contributing to the quality of life in Mount Hope. Children and their families will benefit for many summers to come.

Norwich – The Norwich PRIDE group decided the best way to make a big impact on the appearance of their community was to start small . . . one yard at a time! By taking advantage of the citywide clean-up days set by the city council, PRIDE volunteers offered assistance to those needing help. Crews were organized from church youth groups, the local 4-H, the volleyball team, families and area farmers. The clean-up was a great success, and many people questioned how it might be sustained. Members of the PRIDE group networked with other PRIDE communities, and began a beautiful yard recognition award. An anonymous group of judges was formed and the PRIDE Yard Award selection began. Yard award winners are notified, a yard sign is put in place, and photos are taken for the local paper. The PRIDE committee is convinced that this award program has had a contagious effect on the community. It is amazing what a difference can be made – one yard at a time!

Overbrook – People had expressed an interest in a more eye-appealing flowerbed at the north end of Overbrook's Main Street that would reflect the early history of the area, along with a welcome to the community sign. The Fidelus Club had long maintained an area at the end of Mainstreet, but seemed to be fighting a losing battle with the sloping embankment, winter street chemicals for snow, and summer heat damage each taking their toll on the bed. Several organizations, The Fidelus Club, PRIDE, the Overbrook Betterment Committee, and many other volunteers used their creativity to design a native limestone flowerbed accenting a large limestone community sign and a metal bison silhouette. Redesign of the hill front and decorative plantings combine to give a beautiful first impression of Overbrook. This project demonstrates the communities' history, teamwork, and especially their "hometown pride."

Spearville – Keeping local dollars local can be a challenge for any community, but Spearville PRIDE came up with a solution during the holiday season. In cooperation with local downtown businesses, the Lions Club, school classes, local artisans and other groups and individuals, the Parish Center was transformed into a community specialty marketplace! Filled with booths and tables, the building buzzed as people sold their products, crafts, and bake goods. The city had the downtown decorated for the event and PRIDE decorated the gazebo and band shell. The "Downtown Shopping Night" was very successful and had an economic impact on the community with many businesses commenting on the increase in revenue. Having promoted this event outside the community brought new dollars into town as well.

Towanda –The building was rich in history, but sat unoccupied on Main street. The tin ceilings, wide doors, brick walls and wooden floors were in need of cleaning and care. Towanda PRIDE members saw through the clutter, and had a vision of a community center. The project was started in 1995 and was finally open to the public in May of 2004. After many years of fund-raisers, polishing, cleaning, repairs, and creative investment, the building has become a premiere community center! The Community Building Committee relied on citizens to make the project possible, including collecting over 33,000 crushed aluminum cans to raise funds! The facility will accommodate up to 125 people and features a stained glass "Giving Tree" that recognizes givers with recognition leaves. The renovating of the facility was also an act of historic preservation, with the original ceiling, walls and façade retained. The kitchen had to be completely redone and many families, citizens and organizations contributed to a "kitchen shower" to equip the kitchen. The Towanda community building isn't just a building – it's a labor of love that is the heart of the community.

PRIDE communities position themselves for success through

- an established organization
 - strong networks
 - clear working partnerships
 - an engaged citizenry
 - a plan for improvement
 - a track record of achievement
-

Community of Excellence Award Recipients

A successful Community of Excellence demonstrates that they have:

- Effective organizational structure
- Assessed the local situation and wishes of the community
- Established partnerships and collaborative efforts
- Successfully executed their plans and are completing important projects
- Open meetings and broad citizen involvement
- Developed plans for community improvement
- Utilized local and external resources creatively
- Recognize and celebrate involvement and success

Community improvement does not just happen. The best results come from planning, broad community involvement, and great investment of concerned community members. The greatest payoff comes to communities that do their homework, invest in themselves, share leadership and commitment to the place they live, and develop the systems and partnerships needed to carry them into the future. These are the qualities of great places to live. These are the qualities that deserve recognition. These are the qualities of a Community of Excellence!

The Community of Excellence designation and award is presented to communities that have implemented a comprehensive approach to community and economic development. Community nominees must have met all program requirements to be eligible for an evaluation. Those selected have made outstanding progress in meeting the needs of the community through the PRIDE process.

Alton – Thirty-one thousand hours of volunteer activity and 59 community improvement projects were reported from Alton Pride in 2003! Alton Pride coordinates festivals, community celebrations, public service events and activities for youth, seniors, couples, singles, and groups. If the event happened in Alton, it was done with pride! Alton Pride has done an excellent job of assessing the needs of the community, involving everyone in the planning and execution of their plans, and most importantly, having a great time doing it. Excellent work, Alton Pride!

Almena – The community park was a focus of activity this year, but the park was only a sliver of what Almena Pride does in the community. Almena Pride has a strong network of caring individuals that are committed to the improvement of their community and area. One evaluator wrote, “A noteworthy aspect of Almena is their collaboration with other organizations and communities within their region, which will make your community sustainable for years to come.” Almena Pride’s Prairie Dog Press newspaper is a strong communication tool used for project identification, volunteer recruitment, volunteer appreciation, and event communication. Utilizing the paper, Almena Pride holds the focus on positive community improvement!

Argonia – Argonia Pride has been busy getting citizens involved in community improvement! This year, plans and projects included a new recycling building, the new mini-mart, park facility expansion and improvements, organizing social programs, an extensively improved website, and community promotion for economic development. Community of Excellence evaluators were impressed with Argonia’s five year tourism plan and the community’s entrepreneurial spirit. One evaluator commented, “Argonia is a very dedicated community, with exceptional survival instincts.” In addition to the merging of the Pride board with the City Planning Board, the evaluators were impressed with the community’s clear goals, and measurable plans.

Basehor – Basehor Pride has implemented a successful process of community assessment and planning. When completing the Community Assessment Tool, Basehor Pride developed business and community leadership teams to address each of the assessment areas. After taking an honest self assessment, the community developed plans to address areas of need, and identified priorities for future community development. Pride volunteers are stepping up to do an excellent job organizing, inviting, and involving others into the community. The Pride coordinated City Recreation programs are just one example of how Basehor Pride is stepping forward to actively improve life in Basehor!

Burns – When members of a community begin to invest in one another, trust begins to grow. An environment of trust welcomes creativity and opportunities for individuals to step forward and apply themselves. Burns is this kind of place. It is evident from the cooperative stores they have created, the collaboration to build the community center, the support of the business network in the community, and the creative community promotion ideas using creatively painted roosters. Burns truly has something to crow about, and their modeling of business collaboration and community cooperation has earned them the title of Community of Excellence.

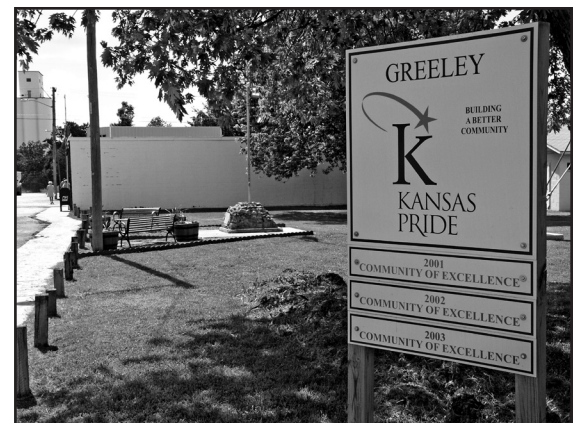
Cunningham – “Observers can see the impact of the PRIDE organization” commented an evaluator. It may have been in the people or in the park along the lit trail, on the main street, or in the yard after yard after yard of the week, but it was evident. Cunningham has been organized with PRIDE for 15 years, and the citizen involvement is evident everywhere you look. There is a sense of pride in the people and place of Cunningham! Noteworthy projects this year include the installation of twenty antique-looking light poles along the walkway in the city park.

Eskridge – Eskridge has enthusiasm and energy! The evaluators commented that community efforts are directed and driven by goals. Eskridge is a jewel in the flint hills of NE Kansas, and is dedicated to community improvement project after project. Their patriotism and support of local troops and veterans was evident in their projects this year. Eskridge PRIDE has recognized and honored their citizens, has addressed immediate needs, and is preparing a plan for the future.

Goff – A small community population does not mean that the community can’t think big! Goff has done an excellent job of assessing local needs and taking action to address them! In assessing the community, a gathering place was highlighted as a community need. Goff PRIDE got busy working on identifying and organizing resources to address the need. By organizing local volunteers and through the support of the Kansas Department of Commerce KAN-STEP funding, a new community center was designed and constructed. In addition, Goff has been busy improving and adding on to the Goff fitness center, another PRIDE project. If all goes to plan, the citizens of Goff will be in great shape to tackle the next community priority!

Greeley – After soliciting input through a community survey, Greeley PRIDE took the comments seriously. In addition to historic preservation, developing a walking trail along the river, and community promotion, the PRIDE group has also been busy with downtown beautification. This small community is engaged – and working on continuously improving itself! Greeley PRIDE is open to new ideas, trying new approaches, and is learning the combined value of many investments in community improvement!

Grinnell – Grinnell PRIDE is doing an excellent job of balancing service and community development. The group provides service by assisting other organizations to meet their goals, like assisting the grocery store with purchase and installation of awnings, staffing blood drives for the Red Cross, and working with the school and churches to improve signs. Grinnell PRIDE also is working on community development by identifying area needs and spearheading the work to address them. The work they are doing to enlarge the local fire station and efforts to improve the availability of quality housing are examples of the commitment to their vision for community development.



Greeley Park

Highland – Highland PRIDE is versatile. The group has aided in the development and smooth organization of social events, parades, fundraisers, and social services – including the ongoing supervision of a food bank. Highland PRIDE is aware of the importance of community appearance, and has implemented numerous beautification projects – including park enhancements and main street beautification efforts. And Highland PRIDE is responsive to immediate project needs. The county-wide effort to send care packages to troops at war was a great success and service to the young men and women serving their country. By attending to the social, physical, and economic aspect of their community through a planned and organized manner, Highland demonstrates the characteristics of a community of excellence!

Kinsley – A good word to describe Kinsley PRIDE is *sustainable*. The Kinsley PRIDE group has created an organizational structure that has allowed it to continue to support the growth and improvement of the community for over a decade. Through local volunteer support, the *Twice is Nice* store collects donated items and then cleans and repairs items before resale. The proceeds from the store are reinvested in matching grants for main street improvement, or dedicated to community improvement projects. Kinsley PRIDE surveys community priorities about every three years, and maintains a strong partnership with city government to address local needs. Excellent organization and commitment to the good of the entire community make Kinsley a community of excellence!

Lakin – Lakin PRIDE is a great balance of investment. The city fully supports the planning and efforts of PRIDE, the Extension office hosts and facilitates meetings, and the membership of the committee all invest themselves to the improvement of the community. Lakin PRIDE hosted a community visioning at the start of 2003, and is moving ahead with plans established. Lakin has recently expanded youth involvement opportunities and has a balanced approach to address city beautification, economic development, and aiding the school and churches with volunteers to assist with social events.

Lenora – Making the most of resources available to them, Lenora PRIDE keeps adding quality projects to this small community. Lenora PRIDE organizes local Kansas Humanities programs, and is engaged with the PATH Intergenerational Project that links youth and older adults in educational projects. In addition, they coordinate a host of programs, activities and projects that make the most of local talent and resources. Between the social events, pet clinics, holiday celebrations, and community planning involvement, it is impossible to be in Lenora without being involved with PRIDE!

Lucas – Creative. Collaborative. Imaginative. These are the words that can be used to describe Lucas. Imagine a community where creative expression is expected. Now imagine the community where that creative expression is organized and promoted. Lucas PRIDE has done an exceptional job of tapping into the creative and artistic resources of the area and encouraging them as a collective entrepreneurial effort. The PRIDE group is adding the touches of city promotion, beautification, and recognition that bind and strengthen this community!

PRIDE communities:

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

Melvorn – Melvorn PRIDE has emerged as an organization that not only gets things done, but does the work in a way that ensures community cooperation and quality work. Following the process to convert a corner building of the main street into a community center, the PRIDE group then turned their attention to enhancing the park on Main Street. When Melvorn PRIDE does something, it is done well! The park enhancement included new public restrooms and redesign of the park for the new park equipment. Melvorn PRIDE is doing an excellent job of looking ahead, planning their work, and working their plan!

Mount Hope – Mount Hope is a newer community in the PRIDE program. From the start, however, they have had a clear commitment to following a community improvement process. While planning the community strategic visioning process, they have involved themselves in some highly visible projects for community improvement. Mount Hope has done an excellent job of reaching out to the whole community and inviting people to get involved! Mount Hope has demonstrated great organization, drive, and commitment to community improvement!

Potwin – The energy and investment of this community improvement group is commendable. The Potwin PRIDE group set goals at the beginning of the year and found themselves leading or contributing to fifty-six community improvement projects. Their projects ranged from coordinating celebrations and events, to raising tons of crops to donate to area shelters, to library improvements, to assisting with the purchase of community fire equipment, to offering free home improvement services. The group is an amazing demonstration of effort and investment in community improvement.

Rossville – Rossville PRIDE is on the move! Working closely with the city government and staff, Rossville PRIDE is doing an excellent job of engaging the community for betterment. Youth are involved in the fundraising for the swimming pool, community groups are partnering to host festivals and work on beautification projects, and PRIDE is involved in leadership development training to strengthen and sustain the depth and quality of involvement. Rossville is a “heads-up” community that is paying attention to self-enrichment and new growth.

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The Kansas PRIDE Program gratefully acknowledges the contributions of our partners and sponsors whose generosity helps support the efforts to build better communities through the training and recognition opportunities of PRIDE. Please join us in thanking these fine organizations

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For more information
about the PRIDE program, contact:

Dan Kahl

Extension PRIDE Program Office
Kansas State University
Agricultural Experiment Station
and Cooperative Extension Service
6-A Edwards Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506-4804
Phone: 785-532-5840
Fax: (785) 532-6175
e-mail: dkahl@oznet.ksu.edu
Web site: www.kansasprideprogram.ksu.edu



Ruth Smerchek

Community Development Division
Kansas Department of Commerce
1000 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 100
Topeka, KS 66612-1354
Phone: (785) 296-3485
Fax: (785) 296-0186
TTY (Hearing Impaired): (785) 296-3487
e-mail: rsmerchek@kansascommerce.com
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