

# FALLS CITY NEBRASKA

Strategically Positioned. Building for the Future.



Our mission is to encourage economic development and growth and improve the business conditions of the Falls City area.

# edge

## FALLS CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH ENTERPRISE VOLUME II ■ 2012

### EDGE Strategically Focused on Business Retention and Expansion



*“As an employee-owned company, hiring the right people is very important to us, and Falls City is one place where we feel we can find those right people.”*

~Dane Anderson  
President & CEO  
WASP, Inc.

WASP, Inc. is a 100% employee-owned company, building an ever-growing presence in Falls City, and its employee owners are on their way to a record year!

After a couple of setbacks, WASP is realizing its highest employment numbers in 10 plus years. As you know, WASP, similar to many companies has endured some challenges over the last 10 years, starting with the tragedy of 9/11, which immediately affected the company due to their direct relationship with the airline industry. More recently, the 2009 great recession also caused a temporary reduction in sales and production, but slow and steady wins the race, and 2012 is shaping up to be a record-breaking year at both their Falls City and Glenwood (Minnesota) locations.

National economic development studies have shown that 60 to 80 percent of future job growth results from the retention and expansion of existing industries. That’s why EDGE has made

business retention and expansion a strategic area of focus.

WASP is a prime example of how EDGE is working proactively to retain and grow the area’s existing industries. EDGE’s first priority was to call on all existing industries—local and corporate headquarters—to open and establish a two-way dialogue with decision-makers. The calls included making a trip to Glenwood, Minnesota, to meet with WASP’s corporate decision-makers in the spring of 2009.

The retention of WASP during times of economic uncertainty has laid the groundwork for continued growth and success. Employment numbers have steadily climbed with the addition of 10 employees in 2010 bringing employment numbers to 37, growing to 65 employees in 2011, and reaching 80 plus employees thus far in 2012 and still hiring. “We are extremely pleased with both the quality and availability of

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# Local Manufacturers Receive Grants, Add Jobs

Two local manufacturers have been awarded a total of \$37,500 dollars in grant funds to assist them with expanding operations and modernizing equipment. As a result, 35 new jobs will be added to the workforce and over \$325,000 dollars will be invested locally.

[Airlanco](#)'s expansion is well underway. The company received a \$7,000 dollar Asset Modernization Grant from the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) for equipment modernization and an \$18,000 dollar Job Training Grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) for skills training of new employees in the fields of welding, CNC operation, painting, fabrication and maintenance, as well as supervisory positions. Airlanco is adding 15 employees to their workforce.



[WASP, Inc.](#) also received a \$12,500 dollar Asset Modernization Grant from NIFA to modernize equipment. WASP is adding 20 new employees to their workforce. *(Photo is equipment purchased by WASP with NIFA funding.)*

*“Thank you for all the hard work EDGE does for WASP and all the industries that call Falls City home. It’s nice to have the outside support and all the extra knowledge available for programs and training that we sometimes don’t know about. We appreciate all your hard work and efforts to help!”*

*~Jerry Koopman, Plant Manager  
WASP, Inc.*

“The Airlanco and WASP expansions are excellent examples of how Falls City EDGE works together with key partners in the state, such as NDED and NIFA, to identify financial resources to help our companies expand and modernize operations, grow jobs and increase the tax base,” said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer.

## Business Retention and Expansion *(cont. from page 1)*

good personnel in Falls City, and therefore plan to continue to hire here as WASP continues to grow,” indicated Dane Anderson, President and CEO of WASP.

“Meeting one-on-one with decision-makers provides us with an opportunity to identify ways EDGE can be instrumental in facilitating retention and growth in the Falls City area,” said Kevin Malone, Vice President of EDGE. “We listen and try to be as responsive as possible.”

WASP, Inc. is a leading U.S. and global provider of products such as cargo dollies, bag carts and extendable conveyors. In 2002, WASP added the United States Military to its distinguished list of customers when they began manufacturing munitions trailers. WASP has shipped products or done conveyor installations in all 50 states, as well as Canada, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Norway, Iceland, England, Spain, Germany, Russia, Guam, China, Singapore, Micronesia, Africa, Australia, Korea and many Middle East countries, including Israel, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Chances are you have encountered a product made by WASP whether that be through your luggage being transported at an airport or that special package being delivered by your local UPS or FedEx representative.



WASP has made a tremendous “*come back*” in Falls City and they are an extremely valuable member of our community. Stay tuned for information about more good things to come because future plans call for continued success, capital investment, streamlined processes and increased production.

EDGE is committed to assisting WASP, as well as other employers, with expanding and growing in the Falls City area. If you would like more information about our business retention and expansion program, please contact the [EDGE office](#). Program resources include removing obstacles that prevent existing firms from remaining in operation, reducing the cost of doing business, improving business competitiveness, increasing markets for business and enhancing business infrastructure.

# 2012 Marketing Well Underway

Steve Kottich, Vice President of EDGE's Marketing-Sales Strategic Action Team, reports that EDGE's 2012 marketing plan is well underway. First quarter highlights included:

EDGE entered into a lead generation agreement with Economic Development Strategies (EDS) of Johnston, Iowa, to position Falls City as an attractive and viable solution to the expansion needs of the call center industry. EDS was specifically asked to focus on generating leads for the [6,700 sq. ft. available office building](#). The consulting firm developed a database of 55 of the largest national call center companies, and then personally contacted each company by phone to ascertain their interest/ expansion plans. Businesses indicating an interest were provided marketing materials and/or a link to the EDGE website for more information on the building and the area's location advantages.



*Available Office Building Focus of Lead Generation Consulting Agreement*

EDGE continued to work with its regional economic development partners to market business location opportunities in the Falls City area. As a member investor of the [Lincoln Area Development Partnership \(LAPD\)](#), EDGE has the opportunity to participate in national/international marketing-sales conferences, trade shows and events—leveraging EDGE's marketing dollars with its regional partners marketing dollars. In April Executive Director Beckie Cromer participated with LAPD in the [International Plastics Showcase \(NPE2012\)](#) in Orlando. “With over 55,000 attendees, a record number of exhibiting companies, it was a great opportunity to talk with decisions-makers in this industry about the advantages of doing business in southeast Nebraska,” said Cromer. EDGE is also looking at opportunities to participate in Nebraska Department of Economic Development marketing conferences and events.



*EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer (right) participated in the International Plastics Show in Orlando, along with Knox County Economic Development Director Toni Tauber (left) and NPPD Representative Keith Ellis (center).*

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hayes State University completed the Richardson County Labor Basin Study. The study is an important piece in selling Falls City as a viable location because it provides prospects with a comprehensive analysis of the available labor pool, including education, occupational experiences and skills, desired wage and benefits and more. [The study is available to download from the EDGE website »](#)

## EDGE Makes Investment to Enhance Skills Training for Falls City High School Students

EDGE has invested \$2,500 dollars towards the purchase of a new Plasma CNC Cutter for the Falls City High School Industrial Arts class. Plasma CNC is a precision cutting process which utilizes computer numerical control to create shapes and parts that are smoother, more intricate and more accurate than other processes available. It is one of the fastest and safest methods of cutting metal.

The equipment will provide a great benefit to students and the community. “The Plasma CNC equipment will enable students to gain knowledge and hands-on experience in a technology that is used on a daily basis by our local manufacturers, including WASP and Airlanco,” said Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director.



*Plasma CNC Cutter*

The total cost of the equipment is approximately \$13,500 dollars. In addition to EDGE's pledge, Falls City Public Schools is contributing \$2,500 dollars and the Future Farmers of America (FFA) is matching the school's contribution. The school rounded out the fundraising with private donations. It was announced at the FFA banquet on April 15<sup>th</sup> that the new equipment will be installed for the 2012-2013 school year.

# Nebraska Diplomats Play an Important Role in the State's Business Recruitment Efforts

The [Nebraska Diplomats](#) is the largest economic development organization in Nebraska with more than 475 business and community leaders from across the state.

Since its formation in 1967, members of the Nebraska Diplomats have worked to grow Nebraska by promoting opportunities for business and industry to locate in our state. Their mission is to help build the state's economy by supporting the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's efforts to assist the growth and expansion of existing businesses, attract new business to the state and improve Nebraska's business climate and competitiveness.



Nebraska Diplomats, Inc.

Diplomats have a unique perspective on what our state has to offer businesses. Its members are executives and business leaders who live and work in Nebraska. They are leaders of a variety of industries based in Nebraska, including energy and hospitality companies, manufacturers, and transportation and logistics companies. Falls City business leaders and EDGE Board Members Kevin Malone and Steve Kottich are members of the Diplomats.

"I have been a Nebraska Diplomat for 20 years," said Steve Kottich. "Our association with this organization has afforded us the opportunity to entertain entities who are interested in investing in our great state. Armed with the knowledge that any new investment in Nebraska is a good thing, we band together to make visitors feel welcome. We also educate them on the various reasons it is called '*The Good Life*.' We Nebraskans share a bond that is uncommonly strong and evident to others. This organization is one of the premier tools to deliver our message."



*EDGE Board Members Steve Kottich (left) and Kevin Malone (right) are members of the Nebraska Diplomats*

As part of the program, a Diplomats member commits to making contact with several business leaders in other states in an effort to interest new companies in doing business in Nebraska. As business leaders who know first-hand the benefits of doing businesses in Nebraska, they add credibility to the efforts of the professional economic developers who work for the state and local communities. Diplomats host business prospects and special guests visiting the state and help local leaders prepare for visits from prospective companies.

Through face-to-face meetings and personal connections, Nebraska Diplomats help expand the number of contacts the State of Nebraska can make in a given year, which is particularly helpful in pursuing opportunities overseas. Many Diplomats represent companies with business interests in international markets. As part of their regular business visits, Diplomats commit some of their time to build relationships on behalf of Nebraska.

During one weekend each fall, the Nebraska Diplomats invite guests and prospects from across the country and around the world to visit the state and attend events including roundtable discussions with CEOs and business consultants, tours of Nebraska businesses and communities and a tailgate hosted at the Governor's Residence followed by a Husker game at Memorial Stadium. Many of the special guests that attend the [Passport to Nebraska Weekend](#) are corporate headquarter CEOs from around the country that have businesses in Nebraska. The host Diplomats thank them for spending time in Nebraska, and pledge to work with them when they are thinking about expanding their business, or if they decide to move their headquarters to Nebraska.

While other states have partnerships with business leaders, few have as coordinated effort as the Nebraska Diplomats. One prospect on a site visit to the state shared this comment: "We were impressed with the depth of support from the Nebraska Diplomats. It is the most effective organization of its kind we are aware of in the U.S." Having business executives and business recruiters work together gives Nebraska an edge in selling our state to prospective companies.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Nebraska Diplomats, please visit their website at [www.neded.org/nebraska-diplomats-home](http://www.neded.org/nebraska-diplomats-home) »

# Peru State Ranked Second in the Nation for Value for Out-of-State Students

*U.S. News and World Report* ranked [Peru State College \(PSC\)](#) second in the nation for value for out-of-state students.

In a press release, PSC President Dan Hanson said, “This distinction is in no small part due to our popular *One Rate, Any State* program which allows all students, regardless of residency, the opportunity to attend Peru State for in-state tuition rates. Today’s students are looking for the kind of personalized, relevant, flexible education Peru State provides. Offering one of the best values in the country for a top-quality education in an intimate college setting is a perfect fit for many students in a difficult economic climate.”

The *One Rate, Any State* program launched in the summer of 2009 as a three-year pilot program. Since then, out-of-state enrollments have increased 36 percent at the institution. The program was made permanent by the Nebraska State College System Board of Trustees in June 2011.



Hanson said, “One of the side benefits of this program is that it has the potential to significantly impact rural economic development in southeast Nebraska by exposing more individuals to this region of the state. Students who move to a state to attend college have a higher chance of staying after graduation or returning at some point in their careers. Roughly 80 percent of our graduates live and work in Nebraska following graduation.”



*EDGE Administrative Assistant Carla Rhodd (left) and Patty Schwab, Nebraska City Area Economic Development Executive Assistant, promote Southeast Nebraska career opportunities at the Southeast Nebraska Career Fair.*

Tuition and fees for the 2011-12 academic year average \$5,648 dollars for on-campus undergraduates. Per credit hour rates at the institution are \$135.25 plus fees for on-campus undergraduate courses, \$200 for online undergraduate courses and \$250 for online graduate courses. Both of PSC’s graduate programs, the Master of Science in Organizational Management with an emphasis in Entrepreneurship and Economic Development and the Master of Science in Education – Curriculum and Instruction, are offered entirely online.

EDGE works closely with higher education institutions serving the southeast Nebraska region, including Peru State, to promote career opportunities in the Falls City area. Most recently, EDGE participated in a successful Southeast Nebraska Career Fair on March 13<sup>th</sup> hosted by PSC.

The full *U.S. News and World Report* article is available at [www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/2012/02/07/10-least-expensive-public-schools-for-out-of-state-students](http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/2012/02/07/10-least-expensive-public-schools-for-out-of-state-students).

For more information on Peru State College, visit [www.peru.edu](http://www.peru.edu).

## Senator Johanns’ Representative Visits Falls City

Falls City EDGE hosted Ray Ringlein, Constituent Service Representative, with Senator Mike Johanns in early February. Ringlein’s work for the Senator centers on issues related to small business and economic development. EDGE arranged for a tour of the community with stops at Southeast Nebraska Communications, Community Medical Center and Airlanco.

“We appreciated the opportunity to meet with Mr. Ringlein and share with him the economic development successes we had over the past few years, as well as some of the challenges we continue to face as a rural area in the economic development arena,” said Dana Rathje, Vice President of EDGE’s Product Development and Public Policy Team.



*Ray Ringlein, Constituent Service Representative*

# Have You Heard the Buzz About Career Academies?

A career academy is a sequence of courses at the high school level, focusing on a broad career area. It is designed to provide opportunities for high school students to explore career fields, gain career and college readiness knowledge and skills, and earn college credit. Career academies assist students in their transition to post-secondary experiences, build partnerships, support economic development and help meet community needs.

Education Service Unit (ESU) 4, serving high schools in Johnson, Otoe, Nemaha, Pawnee, and Richardson counties, developed a Career Academy initiative in 2008 with Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act funds. The ESU 4 Career Academy Advisory Council reviewed data from student surveys and career/economic information in the southeast Nebraska region before recommending Health Science and Energy be the first two programs of study. The Health Science Academy was launched in 2010 and the Energy Academy in 2011.

Students participating in the ESU 4 Academies remain in their own school districts for instruction; however, may leave to attend community-based experiences on a weekly or bi-monthly basis. Some courses are taught by high school teachers certified in the subject area, others by faculty members from Southeast Community College and some are offered online. Hands-on activities, job shadowing, tours and skills training are all part of the coursework. Each school district that decides to participate is able to develop a version of the Academy that best fits the needs of its students and their district.

ESU 4's Health Science Academy offers three courses to students, including an introduction to health science, medical terminology and certified nursing assistant. Last December, students in the Falls City High School Health Academy traveled to Heartland Regional Medical Center in St. Joseph, Missouri. They attended workshops and toured the hospital facilities, providing an opportunity for students to look at various health careers and the future outlook of these careers. Over 80 students are enrolled in the Health Science Academy courses.

The Energy Academy offers three courses, including energy exploration, introduction to energy generation and distribution, and alternative or "green" energy. The Energy Academy will be introduced in the Falls City Public Schools beginning with the 2012-13 school year.

"Career Academies provide a unique opportunity for students in our area to explore different career opportunities," said EDGE Executive Beckie Cromer. "They are gaining valuable knowledge, skills and work experiences that will enable them to be more successful in college and in the workplace."

## Connecting Area Youth with Career Opportunities



*Sterling High School Industrial Tech students tour local industries.*

In April approximately 40 Sterling High School Industrial Tech students spent the day in Falls City to see first-hand how the skills they are learning in the classroom are applied in today's high-tech, industrial workplace. EDGE organized the visit, which included tours of Airlanco, WASP and Vantec.

"Falls City has a diversified industrial base and it was a great opportunity for our students to learn about the many facets of production and manufacturing," said Chris Salberg, Sterling Industrial Technology Teacher. "We appreciate all the efforts EDGE put forth in making this a great learning experience for our students."

"I learned the more skills you have the more money you can make and I think the products that WASP makes are cool," said Billy Richardson, Sterling High School student.



*Falls City students practice getting medication into a syringe during a Health Academy Workshop.*



*Learn more about the ESU 4 Energy Academy. [Click here to watch video »](#)*

# Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Set for Wilderness Falls

The Wilderness Falls senior housing project, located on 31<sup>st</sup> and Barada streets, is complete and the first residents began moving in April 25<sup>th</sup>. The community is invited to attend the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Tuesday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 a.m. at the development site. The event will include lunch and provide the public an opportunity to tour a two-bedroom unit. Lieutenant Governor Sheehy is planning to be in attendance.

“We’re excited to see the Wilderness Falls project completed and encourage the public to attend the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and tour this new residential development in our community,” said EDGE President Bart Keller. “The response from the public has been remarkable and the excitement among our seniors has been overflowing.”



## Local Career Fair Attracts Over 130 Job-Seekers

EDGE and the Richardson County Extension office sponsored a job fair on April 25<sup>th</sup> at Prichard Auditorium in Falls City. The job fair was organized because local employers, as well as employers in the tri-state region, are actively hiring new employees. The job fair, which was free and open to the public, attracted more than 130 students and job seekers.

“Job fairs are a great way of uniting prospective employers with qualified candidates. Attending a job fair can be extremely worthwhile for someone who is looking for work and wants the opportunity to learn about a variety of different job opportunities,” said EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer. “We were pleased to partner with UNL Extension to offer this opportunity to area employers and job seekers.”

Twenty-two exhibitors from the tri-state area represented a variety of occupations, including government, industrial, communications, healthcare, hospitality, customer service, agricultural and gaming industries. Employers were looking for skilled and entry level workers.



*Watkins Aircraft Support Products representative visits with job seekers and students.*

“We appreciate EDGE taking time to coordinate the job fair. We had steady flow of applicants and it was a great opportunity to network with area businesses,” said Sherry Rogman of Staffing Services, Inc. “Thank you. It was fabulous.”

*"The EDGE group continues to do great things for the Falls City community with the recently sponsored job fair. Airlanco appreciated being given the opportunity to connect with potential employees in the local area in order to fill our employment needs."*

*~Alison Kerl  
Human Resources Manager  
Airlanco*

## EDGE Welcomes New Member Investors

**Dr. David & Joyce Borg  
Brown Windle**

*To learn more about EDGE’s program of work and how you can join us in shaping the future of Falls City, visit the [EDGE website](#) or contact [Beckie Cromer, Executive Director](#).*

# A Message from the Director

Falls City EDGE, in cooperation with the City of Falls City, will soon begin developing a plan that will guide the city for the next 10-15 years. *Comprehensive planning* is a term used in the United States by land use planners to describe a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development. The outcome of comprehensive planning is the Comprehensive Plan which dictates public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation and housing. Comprehensive plans typically encompass large geographical areas, a broad range of topics and cover a long-term time horizon.

Comprehensive Plans are required when pursuing certain grants and parts of the plan are guided by Nebraska State Law. While the comprehensive planning process does have some statutory requirements that must be met, Falls City's focus will be economic development and quality community growth. We will soon be looking to engage community members in this planning process as we all work together to create a unified vision for our future. The community engagement process will include town hall meetings, key person interviews, social media, and web based participation. The citizens of Falls City are the stakeholders in this plan and we hope the community will become fully involved in the process.

Stay tuned for more information regarding the Comprehensive Plan; and if you are interested in serving on the steering committee, please call the EDGE office at 402.245.2105 or e-mail me at [director@fallscityedge.com](mailto:director@fallscityedge.com).

~Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director

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