



FALLS CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH ENTERPRISE
VOLUME I ■ 2016

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

Passionate, Proven, Prosperous
Year for EDGE

edge

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The EDGE Annual Meeting and Banquet was held on Wednesday, January 13th with approximately 135 member-investors attending the event. Beckie Cromer, EDGE Executive Director, served as Master of Ceremonies.

The banquet is an annual event that brings together so many volunteers who do so much for the community. EDGE’s top accomplishments for 2015 were showcased in a display and the Annual Report was distributed to investors at the meeting. The most notable success stories of 2015 included the resurgence of the food processing industry with RKFC launching production in October, the groundbreaking on the multi-million dollar, Phase II Excel Development project and the announcement by Southeast Community College that Falls City was chosen as a location for one of six regional learning centers. EDGE President, Bart Keller, summarized the evening’s event by saying, “Our efforts are producing strong results in a variety of areas including recruitment,

workforce development and housing all of which are important components of our economic development program”.

This year’s keynote speaker was Dr. Paul Illich, President of Southeast Community College. Dr. Illich gave an update on the learning center progress, the planned facility improvements for the Beatrice, Milford and Lincoln campuses as well as updates on enrollment. Southeast Community College is working hard to devise a plan that will serve the region’s vast education needs. Falls City looks to initially focus on manufacturing and health care training initiatives. An advisory committee, which will be supported by specialized focus groups, will oversee the programming that will be offered in the area. Programming will serve specific needs as identified by our diverse employer base.

Marc Morehead, Vice President of the Investor and Community Relations committee, awarded F&M Bank with EDGE’s seventh annual Investor of the Year Award. Marc highlighted F&M’s accomplishments by saying, “F&M Bank made significant improvements to their iconic building located in the heart of downtown Falls City. Their interior remodel project included a complete redesign of their long-standing space and their new digs were unveiled during an open house on November 1st.”

(Con’t on pg. 6)



Falls City Learning Center

Southeast Nebraska Career Fair held at PSC

Peru State College held its annual Southeast Nebraska Career Fair at the Al Wheeler Activity Center on February 25, 2016. EDGE participates in the career fair annually as a way to connect with students while encouraging them to choose the region when starting their careers. Attendance was great this year and Cassey Whalen and Beckie Cromer met with nearly 75 students to inform them about the variety of fields available in Richardson County. We discussed openings in finance, education, manufacturing and health care and we were able to provide direct referrals to a number of employers in the area. Our focus was to talk to students about the many benefits of seeking employment upon graduation right here in southeast Nebraska. PSC Student, Kathryn Evans said, "Thank you for chatting with me at the Career Fair...because of you ladies I'm thinking about staying in the area after graduation. Thank you for everything."



Beckie Cromer visits with PSC student

EDGE Unveils New Awards

Falls City EDGE unveiled new community based awards and gave recognition to an inaugural class of deserving individuals. We created these awards in order to honor those who have been instrumental in making Falls City/Richardson County the place we enjoy today. Individuals who dedicate themselves to excellence, who help make Falls City/Richardson County a vibrant place to do business, work and live. We recognized and celebrated this deserving group of people by showcasing them at the EDGE annual banquet in two separate categories: The Millennial Award and Business Wall of Fame (see full story on page 7).

Rachel Aitken received the Millennial award for her extraordinary contributions to her community via leadership and volunteer efforts. She is a 2013 graduate of Sacred Heart High School and maintains a very full schedule by working two jobs, being a full time student and volunteering for the Falls City Ambulance Squad. Rachel is also a graduate of the Lane Leadership program in Falls City. Congratulations Rachel!



Beth Sickel presents Millennial award to Rachel Aitken

EDGE Welcomes New Member Investors

Advocate Investors (\$500-\$999)

Wolfes Printing

Supporter Investors (\$100-\$499)

Don & Meshelle Ferguson

Ken & Mary Grace Thiltges

Michael Prosser

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, at 402.245.2105 or email director@fallscityedge.com.

BBQ & GRAND OPENING

RKFC, Falls City's newest industry, is up and running and we welcome them to the industrial park. This addition adds a new sector, food processing, to our base of employers. The company went through some major upgrades

during the last year including infrastructure upgrades, a building addition and installation of equipment. Company officials have also completed the hiring process for their initial pool of employees including a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspector who holds a permanent parking space at the facility. It's very exciting to see a building that has been empty for many years up and running once again. RKFC shipped their first batch of international product in mid-March with the destination being down under in Australia. The journey consisted of trucking to Kansas City where it was loaded onto a railcar to Los Angeles then on to an ocean liner headed toward Australia. RKFC serves both domestic and international customers.

Falls City EDGE will recognize RKFC during our annual business and industry week BBQ on May 16th where master chef Bart Keller will be cooking up local products produced right at the Falls City facility located at 404 Pacific Street! This will be the third year EDGE has hosted an event at the industrial park. It gives us an opportunity to educate the public about the jobs available and the skills needed to successfully compete for the openings in the food processing, agriculture, metal manufacturing, plastics and service repair clusters. It also gives us the chance to thank the businesses for the contributions they make to the area. The event is open to the public so please plan on joining us in welcoming RKFC to the Falls City Industrial Park. Look for additional details in the coming weeks.



EDGE Host Lt. Gov. Foley

Falls City EDGE hosted Lt. Governor Mike Foley's visit to Falls City on January 14th at the Grand Weaver Hotel. Lt. Governor Foley was traveling the state as a part of the Governor's initiative to deliver the State of the State speech to constituents across Nebraska. Lt. Governor Foley highlighted property tax relief, a more efficient government and growing Nebraska by creating more and better paying jobs as key focuses of his administration in 2016.

The data shows that Nebraska's economic growth rate is sluggish and we are 28th in the nation in employment growth. Our rankings for GDP and personal income growth are also in the middle of the pack and Governor Ricketts' notes, "There is nothing competitive about being in the middle of the pack" which is why he plans to host an Economic Development Summit in July. This summit will serve as an annual event for

Nebraska's business and economic development community members to share ideas and provide input to state government in key policy areas including workforce development, tax policy, and business attraction. The summit will bring together Nebraskans who are dedicated to growing our state which will improve our growth rate, GDP rankings and personal income levels. Governor Ricketts' knows Nebraskans can create the best political and business environment in the nation!

To review the entire State of the State address please visit Governor Pete Ricketts' website: <https://governor.nebraska.gov/press/governor-ricketts-state-state-address>.



Lt. Gov. Foley gives State of State Speech

NEDA Legislative Day

The Nebraska Economic Developers Association's (NEDA) annual legislative day was held on February 4, 2016 in Lincoln at the State Capitol building. NEDA members, including EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer, met with state senators to discuss economic development and tourism-related legislation of interest to their organization.

Specific bills discussed included:

LB800 (Bolz) Appropriates \$1.5 million general funds to Adult Education Program

LB808 (Hansen) Amends LB840 to allow municipalities to add qualifying businesses without a vote of the citizens

LB860 (Hughes) Adds workforce housing as an allowed use of LB840 funding

LB960 (Smith) Transportation Innovation Act to allow for Infrastructure Bank and design/build options that advance economic development initiatives.

LB1017 (Lindstrom) Eliminate residency requirements for Intern Nebraska therefore expanding this popular program.

LB1028 (Morfeld) Increase funding for micro enterprise and commercialization programs within Business Innovation Act

LB1091 (Hilkeman) Appropriates \$25 million to the Site & Building Fund



Legislative Floor

NEDA members encouraged state senators to maintain contact with their economic development officials in the communities they represent as a source of information when researching and discussing economic development issues that directly impact Nebraska communities. To learn more about these bills and other legislation of interest during this session please visit: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/>.

Talent and People Recruitment

Talent and people recruitment is the new buzz in the economic development arena and Falls City EDGE is joining the effort. We're not alone. The State of Nebraska Department of Economic Development has added staff in the area of talent recruitment as has the communities of Hastings, Omaha, Grand Island, Norfolk and Columbus. Some are new to the idea and others have been at it for many years. Falls City EDGE is making it a major focus and strategic priority in 2016 in an effort to build a quality workforce that meets the skilled needs of area business and industry. We have contracted with Firespring to create a comprehensive marketing plan that addresses key recruitment principals that will be implemented as a widespread recruitment initiative. We are in the initial planning stages including a situational analysis which includes input from key members of the planning team. Once complete, we will have a plan that serves as a road map that outlines strategies, tactics, budgets, timelines and overall direction for implementing a successful recruitment campaign.

A separate collaborative effort in the talent arena is underway and includes working with Janet Ady (<http://adyadvantage.com/>) who is well known for her work in the "War on Talent" movement. Thanks to the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development, a consortium of communities hosted an event where Janet Ady outlined unique ways to tackle the talent issue by sharing important lessons with those of us in attendance. She understands workforce and talent availability is a driving factor in most relocation and expansion decisions today and her framework categorizes and prioritizes strategies we can use in our workforce efforts.

Stay tuned for ways you can help in EDGE's efforts as we move through this process in the coming months! There are ways for you to get involved in our people recruitment efforts and we look forward to sharing our ideas.



Janet Ady

Nebraska State Highway Commission Meeting

Key relationships are a big part of economic development efforts, so Falls City EDGE and City of Falls City representatives traveled to Lincoln to attend the quarterly Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) meeting on January 22nd to deliver public comment and meet the new District 1 representative, Mary K. Gerdes. Charlie Radatz delivered Falls City's message which included thanks for the replacement of the Missouri River Bridge at Rulo, the reconstruction of U.S. Highway 159 between Falls City and Rulo and the most recent improvement of the about three miles of U.S. Highway 73 south of Falls City. Charlie went on to note appreciation to NDOR to District One Highway Engineer Tom Goodbarn and his staff for extending to citizens of the Falls City area the opportunity to express their opinions during a July 14th Public Hearing on proposed improvements to 2.9 miles of U.S. Highway 73 within the city limits and extending north of Falls City. The plan called for laying new concrete and reducing from four to three lanes the segment from 7th to 19th Street and milling and resurfacing of the remainder of the highway north of 19th Street. It also included concrete repairs, curb ramps, grading, and removing some guardrail. A large number of citizens registered opposition to this plan, not because the segment does not need to be improved, but because of the planned reduction of a large portion of the highway from four to three traffic lanes.



It was also pointed out that Falls City is a city well-positioned to continue growing and that our industrial buildings are now filled to capacity with the newest addition of RKFC, a food processing manufacturer, which began operations in October of 2015. Mr. Radatz, went on to note that Southeast Community College will soon open a regional training center and our retail space is filled to near capacity. All of these success stories rely on Highway 73, as it is one of the most highly traveled thoroughfares in Falls City. It is used by citizens daily to get from one end of our town to the other. It's a busy highway and getting busier. Thanks to the public's input the plans call for the continuation of four lanes of traffic providing a quality transportation route through the center of the community. While the proposed three lane streets could've efficiently handled left turning motions, they would not be capable of handling the same volume of traffic as can a highway with four lanes. We appreciate NDOR preserving the present four-lane traffic format.

The group, who consisted of Radatz, Mayor Jerry Oliver, City Administrator Gary Jorn and EDGE Executive Director Beckie Cromer, also asked for consideration for future projects including improved access to our city airport. Radatz urged that dialogue be opened between the Department, Richardson County and the City of Falls City in an effort to improve access to this most important public airport facility. Finally, the Department of Roads was reminded of the request by the City of Falls City to lower the speed limit (45 MPH) on U.S. Highway 75 at the north entrance of Falls City in order to increase the safety due to the many ambulances, delivery vehicles, and hospital patrons who utilize the roads in this area.



NDOR Commissioners

The morning concluded with a brief meet and greet with our new highway representative, Mary K. Gerdes. It was a great opportunity to introduce ourselves and provide her details about the strong economic development efforts going on in our region.



Delivering public remarks

Passionate, Proven, Prosperous year for EDGE

(con't from page 1)

The F&M project can be described as a complete facelift and includes a new lobby area which includes a beverage station and a TV, updated offices, integrated teller stations and much more. It is a completely different bank when you walk in the door and they have created a new and improved area for their valuable customers to do business. "Pardon Our Dust but Improve We Must" adorned the entrances of the bank for most of 2015 and customers and staff alike endured the ups and downs that come with a major improvement project but the community is lucky to have such a beautiful, updated addition to the Main Street district. F&M Bank employs 17 people, invested more than \$3/4 of a million dollars in their community, and utilized several local contractors in their project. We thank them for choosing Falls City as a place to do business, make investments and create jobs. Mark concluded his presentation by saying, "On behalf of the EDGE Board of Directors, our Investors, the people of Falls City and Richardson County we say thank you for your outstanding community investment!"

Beth Sickel, Past President of EDGE and Executive Vice President at F&M Bank, was the presenter of the award ceremony where five deserving recipients (See EDGE Presents Community Based Awards on page 2) were recognized as part of the evening's program.

During the business meeting Tim Heckenlively was elected to serve another 3-year term as a General Director. EDGE President Bart Keller turned over the gavel to incoming President, Ray Joy, and concluded the meeting by saying, "We are always excited to have new members get more involved with EDGE at the Board and Committee levels. If you want to find out more about becoming involved in the exciting things EDGE is doing, please talk to Beckie Cromer or any Board member. I urge you to get involved and help make a difference in Falls City and Richardson County."

UPCOMING EVENTS

Falls City EDGE collaborates with many partners throughout the year and hosts many community events. Here are some of the upcoming events:

- May 7th – City Wide Garage Sales
- May 16th – Business & Industry Week BBQ at RKFC 11:30 am – 2:00 pm
 - June 11th – Chamber Golf Tournament
- July 12th – NE Governors Summit on Economic Development
- July 23rd – FC Aquatic Center Triathlon
 - July 28th – Lemonade Days



Work at the Wilderness Falls Site

Housing Updates

Housing is a major piece of any economic development puzzle and all states and localities recognize its importance. Falls City has been fortunate in recent years as we have seen millions of dollars invested in the construction of both market rate and incentivized supported housing for both seniors and families. Preliminary work for the Wilderness Falls II project is currently underway. This year long

construction project, which includes 7-duplexes, will consist of four 2-bedroom units, eight 3-bedroom units and two 4-bedroom units that will rent for \$475, \$515, and \$560 per month respectively.

For more information or to obtain a pre-application for Wilderness Falls please contact Beckie Cromer at 402.245.2105 or e-mail director@fallscityedge.com.

INCOME QUALIFICATIONS: All applicants must meet current income qualifications with the annual household income less than the following amounts: 1 Person: \$24,000 2 Person: \$32,000 3 Person: \$40,000 4 Person: \$48,000 5 Person: \$56,000 Additional Details: March 6, 2015	RENTAL INFORMATION: ENCL. DEVELOPMENT GROUP 1001 E. Main Street, Suite 100 Falls City, NE 68502 Phone: (402) 274-3300 Fax: (402) 274-3304 E-mail: (402) 431-1343	Wilderness Falls II Maintenance Free Living
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH: Midwest Housing Development, Inc. 1011 Main Street, Suite 100 Falls City, NE 68502		



EDGE Presents New Awards

Photo Credit: Falls City Journal

The Business Wall of Fame candidates have made significant contributions in Falls City/Richardson County in the area of volunteerism, leadership, and philanthropic activity. They have been role models for citizens and were instrumental in making Falls City the Passionate, Proven, and Prosperous community we enjoy today. The four community leaders who make up the inaugural class of the Falls City EDGE Wall of Fame Award are:

Bill Schock, World War II Hero and owner of the Falls City Journal, is 97 years young and, as was written in his nomination letter, should be recognized for “all of the amazing and wonderful things he has done for his hometown for almost a century!” Bill, through his writings in the Journal, has reinforced the connections among the people living in this community for decades. He is intrinsically woven into the fabric of this community and we are proud to honor him. Bill survived being a prisoner of war for 13 months and got through it with a sense of humor and strong faith. He has openly shared his humor and faith with this community and we are all better because of him. Thank you, Bill, for everything you have done for our country and our community.

The late John Morehead was President of Richardson County Bank for nearly 40 years and also enjoyed an early career as an FBI agent. He enjoyed being involved in many civic activities throughout the course of his life. John’s nomination letter noted, “John, and his wife Amy, are among the persons who Falls City has been blessed to have as residents who understood and lived the philosophy that it takes individuals giving back to their community to make it better.” John was a brilliant scholar, earning two law degrees in just five years and was a National Champion trap shooter. He was a civic minded, generous philanthropist who was instrumental in the creation of the Downtown Modernization, Inc. entity which was founded and funded by local business persons and dedicated to downtown retailing. Downtown Modernization is responsible for anchoring our downtown business district with the location of Pamida in the 1970’s. John passed away last April at the age of 87, just shy of his 60 year wedding anniversary to the love of his life, Amalia. Falls City is thankful for the contributions of the Morehead family and we honor John’s role in all the success over the past 4 decades.

The late Rodney P. Vandenberg, former Falls City Mayor, Nebraska District 1 Highway Commissioner and President of First National Bank, passed away at 78 years old this past May. Rod was Falls City’s guiding light, biggest cheerleader, and philanthropic giant and he is greatly missed. The Falls City Journal said it best, “He was civically active and financially generous in a way unrivaled by anyone who came before him and set the bar astronomically high for the generosity of people to come.” Rod was a member of the Falls City EDGE Board of Director’s and was instrumental in many of the projects we’ve landed during these past 10 years. His business savvy, personable demeanor and welcoming attitude is a big part of the many successes we share in today.

Stephen P. Kottich, former 2 ½ term Mayor of Falls City and owner of Miller Monroe Company, is the one we attribute for bringing Falls City’s economic development efforts to where they are today. His vision and foresight laid the groundwork necessary for Falls City to compete in the economic development arena and many of the business recruitment successes, including WASP/FAST, Herzog, The Ames Companies and Vantec, are attributed to his work and salesmanship. Steve was Mayor of Falls City for 10 years and during that time the City purchased KCP&L’s gas franchise thus creating a municipally owned gas company that had the capital necessary to fund a new economic development program. He has been a key player in Falls City’s economic development efforts for a ¼ of a century and he was also the first President of EDGE. His leadership during EDGE’s formative years afforded Falls City the distinct opportunity to successfully transition from a public to private economic development entity.

Congratulations to this inaugural class of dynamic leaders!

**Falls City Economic Development
& Growth Enterprise (EDGE)**

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