



Furnas/Harlan Partnership Meeting April 1st, 2003

- The Furnas/Harlan Partnership meeting was held at Southern Valley High School on April 1, 2003. There were 40 people in attendance.
- Ken Johnson, Twin Valleys PPD, greeted those present and had everyone introduce themselves. He then gave an overview of the January 21, 2003 Public Forum.
- The 2003 Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) survey presentation was conducted by Jack Ruff and Tara Hosick, both with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. A total of 38 businesses were surveyed in February by members of the Furnas/Harlan Partnership and the Nebraska DED. The interviews were being conducted to collect their views on the strengths and challenges of the area's economy as well as to learn more about individual business operations and needs.
- A couple of encouraging replies from the surveys indicated that of those completing the survey during the next year they anticipate adding 30 new employees and investing over \$2.3 million on capital expansion.
- **Focus Group Reports:**

Business Retention/Expansion – Ed Newcomb reported that this focus group had decided to get all the communities in the two counties activated on the NEDI Online program. The towns that have not yet been activated will hopefully do so in the near future. Another topic that was discussed extensively, was “transfer of businesses” when the current owners retire, trying to keep the business operating instead of closing.

Tourism & Recreation – Raylene Stephens reported on the project this group is undertaking, Women's Fishing Seminar to be held at Harlan Lake September 12-14, 2003. The Women's Wilderness Weekend that has been held in the past will be August 15-17, 2003.

Alternative Agriculture – Keith Roberts reported on the progress being made on A Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Enterprise Workshop to be held April 26, 2003 in Orleans.

Technology/Telecommunications – Roger Hoffman reported that their group was interested in the possibility of classes to be held at various schools on using technology, computers and developing Web-Pages, etc.

Housing – Jim Cooley reported that his group has been looking into the housing market, both rental and houses for sale.

- The focus groups spent some time discussing ideas and projects that they may want to work on in the future along with progress reports on existing projects.
- The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for August, 2003 at the Southern Valley School.