PRIDE Day Conference a Great Success

“Unity In the Community” was the theme of the 33rd annual PRIDE Day conference held in Great Bend on September 27, 2003. Volunteer community representatives from across the state gathered to collect new ideas and identify resources available for their community improvement efforts.

Sedgwick County Commissioner Tim Norton kicked off the conference with inspiring remarks about the importance of community and the value of those people that dedicate themselves to the common cause. Relating his experience with the rebuilding of Haysville after a tornado, he encouraged other communities not to wait for a disaster before they get involved and take action within the community. In the afternoon workshop sessions that followed, community members learned tips for more effective collaboration from consultant Toni Boyles; developed fund-raising strategies in a session with Herb Callison, Kansas Non-Profit Organization; and picked up tourism promotion ideas from Scott Allegrucci of the Kansas Department of Commerce, Division of Travel and Tourism.

The day concluded with a banquet and recognition celebration to honor outstanding efforts in community development.

A PRIDE Year in Review

There was much to celebrate at the 2003 PRIDE Day conference. In the 2002-2003 PRIDE year, volunteers in 65 communities organized themselves for community betterment across Kansas tackling over 1600 community improvement projects. PRIDE communities established goals and tackled projects that included:

- Community celebrations that attracted hundreds of people to town.
- Providing needed services - including food pantries, community gardening projects, providing childcare services, volunteering for public events, purchasing computers for schools, making public facilities accessible to everyone, and even building fire stations.
- Improving the environment - through clean-up projects, painting buildings and homes, tree planting, and park improvements.
- Improving the social environment - through working together for a common cause, and making everything from quilts, to exercise centers, to building or remodeling community buildings.
- Improving the local economy - through farmers markets, supporting co-ops and local business, and effectively garnering outside resources ... nearly $3.5 million in Community Development Block Grant funds through the Kansas Department of Commerce alone, not to mention grants through the Kansas Department of Transportation, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, The Beaumont Foundation of America, and other funding sources.

PRIDE is what we all can take in our efforts to make our Kansas communities strong, healthy places!
 Communities win awards at PRIDE Day

Community of Excellence

Twenty PRIDE communities received recognition for their hard work and excellence at the 2003 Kansas PRIDE Day celebration. Communities were recognized for outstanding organization and advancement (Community of Excellence Award) or for outstanding community improvement projects (STAR Awards).

Fifteen communities were honored by receiving “Community of Excellence” awards during the 2003 Kansas PRIDE Day Conference on Saturday, September 27 in Great Bend. Winners of the “2003 Community of Excellence” awards are:

- **Alton**, Osborne County, population 114
- **Argonia**, Sumner County, population 524
- **Basehor**, Leavenworth County, population 2,324
- **Beattie**, Marshall County, population 273
- **Burns**, Marion County, population 271
- **Eskridge**, Wabaunsee County, population 582
- **Goff**, Nemaha County, population 177
- **Greeley**, Anderson County, population 330
- **Grinnell**, Gove County, population 323
- **Highland**, Doniphan County, population 983
- **Lakin**, Kearny County, population 2,336
- **Lucas**, Russell County, population 427
- **Melvern**, Osage County, population 433
- **Potwin**, Butler County, population 449
- **Rossville**, Shawnee County, population 1,009

Community of Excellence communities were visited, reviewed and selected by a panel of community development professionals from Kansas and surrounding states. All of the communities designated “Community of Excellence” demonstrated outstanding ability to involve their community in a process of community improvement. They had assessed the community situation, developed clear goals and projects to meet existing needs, and had a “can-do” attitude about improving their town. These communities have demonstrated what the power of collaborative volunteer support can do!

Each winner of the “Community of Excellence” award received an award and $500 to apply to future community improvement projects.

STAR Award

Fifteen communities received the “STAR Award” in honor of outstanding community development projects. The “STAR Award” recognizes communities for projects completed during the previous PRIDE year that have had a great impact on the community. The 2003 winning communities and projects were:

- **Almena** – Frisbee golf course & city park improvement
- **Alton** – Community center remodeling
- **Argonia** – City-wide cleanup project
- **Beattie** – Main Street beautification and museum
- **Burns** – Community center construction
- **Clearwater** – Construction of a fitness center
- **Formoso** – Construction of Jewell Co. Fire Dist. #6 Firehouse
- **Greeley** – Gazebo and trail along Pottawatomie Creek
- **Grinnell** – Main street Christmas decorations and programs
- **Highland** – Prairie Trails Days
- **Lansing** – Fourth of July celebration
- **Lucas** – Community Smithsonian exhibit
- **Melvern** – Construction of a community building
- **Potwin** – Renovation and updating of community building

These projects are testimony to the impact of people investing in one another and their community. Each STAR community was awarded a trophy and a check for $300 to be applied to future community improvement efforts.
The Kansas PRIDE program, in collaboration with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, hosted a workshop on September 26, 2003 for Kansas PRIDE communities to explore the connections between a healthy natural environment and a healthy community; to affirm the importance of local natural resources; and to look at creative means by which citizens can improve the quality of life in their community through environmental preservation or improvement. A healthy environment can contribute to community sustainability in many ways. These include, but are not limited to:

- Elevated property values
- Physical health of residents
- Recreation opportunities
- Economic enhancement
- Creating a desirable living environment

Panel Discussion

Nineteen Kansas communities sent delegates to the Healthy Ecosystems - Healthy Communities workshop in Great Bend. Participants attending the workshop enjoyed a panel discussion of Kansas PRIDE community representatives and others that shared examples of successful environmentally related community improvement efforts. Panelists included: Dorothy Lickteig representing Greeley PRIDE, Thelma Everhart representing The Friends of Canton, and Rex Turnbull representing the Gateway Coalition Pride Boosters of Eskridge.

Helpful Programs and Resources

George Potts, representative of the Kansas Nature Based Tourism Alliance told participants about the nature-based tourism initiative and of some of the success stories in Kansas. George also works closely with the O.W.L.S. program through the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to encourage schools and communities to establish Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites. Both of these programs are excellent resources for funding and promotion of efforts that improve the local environment, and enhance community health through greater education, recreation, and tourism opportunities.

When looking for financial support to make environmental improvements, one source of state funds is the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. KDWP staff member Chris Mammoliti shared information on the department and funding initiatives that a community may consider when doing environmental improvements. Mammoliti said that KDWP is committed to environmental and community enhancement, and supports city park and recreation improvement projects.

Keynote Speaker

Brad Loveless, Green Team Coordinator from Westar Energy, spoke to the value of the physical environment in relation to community quality of life. Mr. Loveless mentioned that the natural environment is one of the indicators for the criteria used to rank the countries “most livable communities.” Mr. Loveless went on to share many examples of how the Westar Energy Green Team has both improved the natural environment and the lives of Kansans through environmental improvement projects. The Green Team is a shining example of the importance and effectiveness of corporate resources available for community environmental enhancement.

Field Trip to Cheyenne Bottoms

Cris Collier, Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau led the workshop on a trip to the Cheyenne Bottoms. Cris highlighted on the trip how Great Bend has been able to increase usage of the wetland area while improving the local economy. Through creative marketing and “packaging” of services, the Great Bend CVB has been very effective in, as Cris says, “putting heads on beds.” Hunting packages, birding tours, and programmed sightseeing are just some of the ways that the Great Bend CVB has utilized the local wetland as a community-building resource. Workshop participants enjoyed the energy, creativity, and practical example that the field trip offered to the workshop.
Community Asset Identification and Planning Exercise

The workshop participants returned to the Holiday Inn to begin an assessment exercise led by Robert Wilson, K-State Research and Extension, Office of Local Government. Utilizing highlighters and maps of the state of Kansas, participants were guided through an asset identification exercise to creatively consider their community natural resources. Consideration was given to area landmarks, natural features, cultural or historical points of interest, and even wildlife or natural plant communities that might be unique or remarkable in some way. The exercise then explored the status of the identified resource, and the connections the resource has with the community. For many participants, the exercise brought clarity and new enthusiasm as they considered the possibilities for future projects and development in ways that more fully utilize local natural resources.

Closing Comments

Jay Barnes, Director of the Kansas Natural Resource Counsel, gave closing comments for the day. Mr. Barnes recapped the importance of community level environmental action, and the significance of the proceedings of the day. He emphasized the timing to develop such an initiative could not be better. Mr. Barnes pointed to examples of supporting evidence in Kansas including the availability of state and federal funds for natural resource and community development (as we had heard throughout the day). He encouraged communities to take purposeful and immediate action to start making the best possible future through working together to preserve and improve the natural and community environment.

The Future of the PRIDE Community Environmental Enhancement Proposal

Kansas PRIDE is working closely with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency on a proposal to create an opportunity for PRIDE communities to identify and enhance their local natural resources to improve local quality of life and economic development opportunities. This proposal is a follow-up to the workshop in September. While the confirmation of support has not yet been received, we are moving ahead in confidence that it will be accepted.

Kansas PRIDE is seeking two to six PRIDE communities that are willing to seriously commit to becoming involved in a process that would involve their community in an assessment and planning process. PRIDE communities interested in being selected must respond to the questions on the Pilot Community Nomination Cover Sheet.

What would the Selected Communities do?

- The pilot communities selected would go through a process to:
  - Host a public meeting to discuss the local environment and generate ideas for environmental and community improvement (Facilitation provided)
  - Identify a core group of volunteers that would work through the assessment and planning process
  - Work with a K-State Research and Extension coordinator to complete a natural resource assessment
  - Develop a long-range community resource enhancement/development plan
  - Host a second public meeting (facilitation provided) to review assessment findings, propose draft plan, and identify community priorities and support
  - Identify areas of local environmental improvement and coordinate improvement projects

When would this take place?

We are proposing this would take place during the 2004-2006 calendar years. By January 1, 2004, we would like to have identified the pilot communities that will be participating. The pilot communities will organize and ready themselves for a kick-off community meeting in the spring. The assessment process will take place in the following months to be completed by the end of 2004. The draft plan would be completed and a second public meeting held sometime in the spring of 2005. By the end of 2005, the community would have implemented their first steps toward their adopted plan. In 2006, the communities would be sharing their successes with other communities that want to do the same!
What would the Pilot Communities Receive?

Selected communities will receive:
• One-on-one technical assistance and consultation
• Guidance through the assessment and planning process
• Facilitation assistance for the public meetings
• Payment for expenses involved in the process
• Financial assistance for environmental improvement projects

Who should be involved?

This project will be most successful with leadership from people with a passion for the environment and for their community. It will be a time consuming project, so it will require the commitment and ability to dedicate time and energy to the cause. It will require the collaborative support and involvement of city government, local citizens, and community groups. It is not recommended that your community PRIDE committee take this on as their primary mission, but IS recommended that your community PRIDE supplement and support the project through assistance with hosting the public meetings, assisting with people power for improvement projects, and through being supportive by whatever other means possible.

Expected results

Communities that participate in this pilot project will be the “test communities” in Kansas. However, case studies across the nation indicate that communities that share in public decision-making, that are implementing a detailed development plan, and that are purposeful to protect and enhance their natural resources, are the communities that are attracting residents and experiencing favorable growth. The pilot communities involved with this effort will:
• Test a participatory process to assess their natural resources and develop an implementation strategy for their goals.
• Initiate an action plan for their community and resource enhancement.
• Share their success and help to develop a process and tools for other Kansas communities to assess their natural resources.

We anticipate that the PRIDE communities in this pilot will also find that once they begin exploring community improvement based on natural resource enhancement, that they will discover many resources and opportunities for community improvement that will enhance the local economy and quality of life for it’s residents.

Thank You to PRIDE Sponsors!

The Community of Excellence and STAR Project evaluation process, the annual PRIDE Day Conference, and the community recognition banquet and awards are made possible through the generous support of Kansas PRIDE sponsors. We would like to thank the following PRIDE sponsors for their support of community improvement efforts through Kansas PRIDE, Inc. during the 2003-2004 PRIDE program year.

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Southern Kansas Telephone Company, Inc.
The Boeing Company
The First National Bank - Cunningham
Westar Energy
Alton Summer Jubilee

The PRIDE-sponsored Alton Summer Jubilee was held Saturday, August 23, on a very hot day. A bicycle fun ride started the day at 7:30 for those seeking some early morning fun. Cyclists make it back in time for the big parade at 10:30. We had 100 entries in the parade this year, giving five cash awards of $50 each. Our theme was “Showing Our School Pride” and to add to the parade, the Alton Alumni Association gave a special $50 award to the best school float. The day continued with many activities including; a pie baking contest, music in the park in the afternoon, games for all ages, antique tractor pull, a BBQ meal at 5 PM followed with a benefit auction at 6:30 (the benefit proceeds go for park improvement), and the very entertaining stage show at 7:30 “My Town”. The Rural Fire District #3 sponsored a street dance following the program. And on Sunday everyone returns for a community church service followed with a potluck dinner. Our small town of 117 grows to about 1,200 on Jubilee day, we involve every group to make this a great success. We invite all communities to join us on the 4th Saturday of August in 2004!

Kansas PRIDE Board of Directors

The Kansas PRIDE Inc. Board of Directors is comprised of representatives of the PRIDE program administering agencies, program sponsors, and participating communities. We especially wish to thank these individuals for their time and commitment in service to the program. The 2003-2004 PRIDE board:

Larissa Long, Chairperson Aquila, Inc.
Jerry Lindberg, Treasurer Kansas Economic Development Alliance
Judy Moler Kansas Association of Counties
Bob Helm Midwest Energy, Inc.
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Turning the Tide in Your Community

Sometimes small actions can have a large impact. It may be the tossed snowball that sets off the avalanche, or the single rifle shot that sparks a war. In society, there may be similar events that create trends that set off behavioral epidemics. In the book, The Tipping Point; How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, author Malcom Gladwell explores how and why little actions can spark social movements.

While the entire book is a fascinating read, one chapter really brightened my day as a PRIDE coordinator. In chapter four titled, The Power of Context, Gladwell questions what factors may have been responsible for the huge decline in crime in New York City in the 1990s. He makes a convincing argument that the environmental context of the area, (in this case, broken windows, trash, and graffiti) may serve as the tipping point for crime and negative social behavior. If a community does not care enough to enforce the law, or care for their property, why should anyone else follow social order? Gladwell then gives some detailed examples of how efforts to clean up and fix up neighborhoods and areas started the turn-around of reducing crime and negative social behaviors in the city.

The Tipping Point offers wonderful testimony to the importance of PRIDE. By making the investment in the community, whether it is through fix-up, clean-up efforts or community beautification work, your PRIDE group is sending strong signals to the community. The underlying message is that, as a community, you care. You care enough to take pride in the place where you live, to enforce some guidelines for healthy living, and watch out for one another. Community PRIDE groups are tipping their community toward stronger relationships and healthier living.

I highly recommend that you check out or purchase The Tipping Point; How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference for your public library!


— Dan Kahl
Youth Recognition Awards

The Kansas PRIDE program recognized eight outstanding youth at the annual PRIDE Day Conference for providing service and leadership in their communities. Nominated youth in the Youth Leadership, and Community Service categories were reviewed and selected based on their leadership initiative, commitment, and impact on the community they served. These youth are great examples of local persons stepping up to provide needed leadership for community improvement. Through their investment of their time, energy, and talents, these youth have made a positive impact in their communities.

Youth Leadership Award Recipients

The Youth Leadership Award recognizes youth that have demonstrated leadership skills through addressing a community issue; proposed a new idea and organized efforts to implement it; helped to resolve community conflict; or have inspired others to community service.

Sara Mettlen, Lucas
Sara aids the Lucas PRIDE committee in planning and organizing community improvement activities. She was responsible for the coordination of the youth activities at the Lucas Annual Festival and the community youth Christmas Program, and is involved with other events through PRIDE.

Michael Reichenberger, Mount Hope
As the coordinator for the Mount Hope PRIDE Tree Kids Project, Michael coordinated teams to raise nearly $1,000 to purchase, and plant trees in the community. Michael now coordinates the tree care teams to water and care for the trees.

Whitney Whitman, Park City
Whitney arranged and supervised childcare activities for Girl Scout leaders, and is involved with recruiting members and participating in the Park City Ring of Clowns.

Youth Community Service Award Recipients

The Community Service Award recognizes individuals for outstanding commitment, dedication, and service to a community through volunteerism.

Danielle Lloyd, Fort Scott
Over the last two years, Danielle has been involved in over forty different community improvement projects and has kept track of over 500 students and their involvement in the Middle School PRIDE program.

Kody Pounds, Glasco
Kody Pounds, an eighth grader from Glasco, coordinated the design, planting, and tending of a community garden from securing funding, to incorporating the garden into the school curriculum, to his sharing of the produce with elderly community residents.

Katrina Ostmeyer, Grinnell
Katrina will tell you that service to the community is not something that you do when you get around to it; it is a way of life. She is the “go-to person” for help in Grinnell, and it is not uncommon for her to be working several hours a week to serve in 4-H, PRIDE, or the Summer Reading Program.

Joel Schneider, Lucas
Through his concern for the community, and passion for the theater, Joel contributed over 21 days of service as the projectionist, ticket and concession salesperson, theater cleaner, background coordinator, and lighting and sound technician for the Lucas community theater.

K.C. Arnold, Park City
K.C. is an eighth grader that has invested himself in helping Park City PRIDE and the community to be a better place. He was recognized by PRIDE for his willingness to work as hard and as long as they need him with a smile on his face and an outstanding attitude.

Kansas PRIDE applauds these outstanding youth for their initiative and dedication to improving their community through service.
**Important PRIDE Dates 2004**

March 19  
- Board of Directors meeting
  (Wilson)

April 15  
- Deadline for 2004-2005 Kansas PRIDE Program Official Entry Form and Government Resolution
- Deadline for requesting a year-end, on-site evaluation for the “Community of Excellence” award designation

June 1  
- “STAR” Award materials due in PRIDE office
- Youth Leadership/Youth Community Service Award nominations due in PRIDE office

June 6-11  
- Year-end, on-site community evaluations

June 18  
- Board of Directors meeting
  (Cottonwood Falls)

July 1  
- Kickoff for the new PRIDE program year

November 5  
- Board of Directors meeting
  (Abilene)

November 6  
- PRIDE Day (Salina)

The Kansas Department of Commerce, K-State Research and Extension, and private-sector companies and associations partner together to make the PRIDE program successful. For assistance contact the PRIDE staff: Beverly Wilhelm at (785) 296-3485; Dan Kahl at (785) 532-5840