PRIDE in Northern Ireland?

Over the university spring break I was privileged to be a part of a K-State class that visited Northern Ireland to study the conflict and peace process there.

In Northern Ireland, they refer to the conflict as “The Troubles” and depending on who you visit with, they may define the troubles as a religious conflict, a political conflict, or even as a civil rights issue. The issue of national affiliation and authority is central and over-arches many of these other entangled issues.

As I was listening to Irish community members talk about their divided communities, the importance of PRIDE struck me with great clarity. The troubles in Northern Ireland have kept many communities from forming a common vision for the future and from working together toward that future. In several of the communities we visited, the environment reflected the conflict in the community. The conflict was evident through graffiti and uncared for or intentionally destroyed areas.

In contrast, in PRIDE communities, we see people that are investing in the places they live, in creating or improving services to others, and in the well-being and quality of life for their community. PRIDE communities reflect the care and investment in others and in the places we call home.

With the current peace process, the situation in Northern Ireland is improving, but they could learn a great deal from the success of communities in Kansas PRIDE!

— Dan Kahl – Extension PRIDE Coordinator

NEW PRIDE Staff Joins Team

Connie Hoch joined the Kansas PRIDE staff July 5, 2005. Connie has been a part of K-State Research and Extension since 1991 working as the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent in Barber and Lyon counties. She states that the best part of Extension is getting to know and working with the great citizens of Kansas. Her passion is helping individuals build their leadership capacities. Each person in community possesses leadership abilities and when those abilities are strengthened and used communities will gain by having common goals and visions.

Robert Kennedy states, “The future is not completely beyond our control. It is the work of our hands.” Connie looks forward to working with communities to build and meet the goals set by their members.

2005 PRIDE Day Conference

PRIDE Day, the annual conference and recognition event for the Kansas PRIDE program, will be held jointly with the Kansas Department of Commerce’s Kansas Main Street program in 2005. A shared conference will mean a larger venue of workshops available to PRIDE communities. The PRIDE recognition banquet will be within the larger conference schedule. The Kansas Main Street/PRIDE conference is scheduled for October 19-21 in Emporia. The Kansas PRIDE Awards Banquet will be at noon on Thursday, October 20. The staff at the Kansas Department of Commerce anticipates the conference information and registration materials will be distributed soon.
Rossville Winner of Extreme Web Site Makeover!

Rossville, Kansas entered the Kansas PRIDE and CivicPlus Extreme Web site Makeover Contest and won a new web site valued at more than $20,000. “We are excited to be able to provide a wealth of information to our residents, future citizens, and investors with the new web site,” said Shelly Buhler, Mayor of Rossville. “This is a great gift Rossville has been awarded.”

CivicPlus is a Manhattan based company that specializes in developing web sites for cities, counties, and other public organizations. Its modular-driven format is easily maintained and updated by using Microsoft Word. “Many of the employees at CivicPlus are from small towns in Kansas, so we were interested in a way to give back to small communities. We wanted to give a small community in Kansas the unlimited resources and value that a web site can provide,” said Laura Munsch, Director of Sales. The winning town received a new design, a comprehensive site, training, and a three-year support program. “Many towns think a web site is just a postcard to show what their city looks like. While it can attract outsiders, a web site is also a fantastic tool for community building,” said Dan Kahl, PRIDE Program Coordinator. “Rossville and the other member communities that entered the contest recognize the opportunities to enhance their town through technology.”

Rossville’s new web site, www.rossvillekansas.us, offers many unique features that Mayor Shelly Buhler is eager to share with her residents. Residents are able to sign up for an e-mail system that Buhler plans on using to send the town’s newsletter, meeting agendas, and even notices for baseball game rainouts. “The information available on the web site will help current and new citizens get involved in Rossville. On the web are utility services and community information that we hope will help make the transition easier for new residents. We also hope it will act as an invitation to become involved in the community,” said Buhler. “We want our residents to feel comfortable and be a part of this great community.”

“CivicPlus is community-minded, and recognizes how important small communities are to Kansas,” said Kahl. “When businesses and organizations combine their unique resources in creative way, we can really help the state of Kansas and rural communities to help build better communities.”

Plans for an Extreme Web site Makeover competition for 2006 are being discussed between CivicPlus and Kansas PRIDE.

Youth Program Assistance through AmeriCorps

The proposal by the Kansas Campus Compact to the Kansas Office for Community Service has officially been funded! This program will provide support to community youth programs. The project will establish a program that identifies and trains college students from Kansas Campus Compact colleges and Universities to work with local community youth programs. Member Institutions with Kansas Campus Compact include:

- Allen County Community College
- Baker University
- Butler Country Community College
- Cloud County Community College
- Fort Hays State University
- Fort Scott Community College
- Garden City Community College
- Highland Community College
- Independence Community College
- Johnson County Community College
- Kansas State University
- Kansas Wesleyan University
- Labette Community College
- Seward County Community College
- Southwestern College
- University of Kansas
- University of Saint Mary

Any of these institutions can participate in this project, although only five or six will be eligible through this project grant. The college students (enrolled in the AmeriCorps Program) will provide service through leadership and program support to local community youth groups (such as 4-H, PRIDE Youth, Church groups, etc.) Through regular visits, the college student will provide leadership/team building lessons, and help the youth to identify, plan, and carry out a community improvement project. If this sounds like a great fit for your youth PRIDE program, please contact the Kansas PRIDE Office. Having the local community PRIDE contact the college will help college leadership understand the desire to support this type of partnership!
PRIDE Park in Melvern — Children in Melvern have a safe and clean environment in which they can play thanks to Melvern PRIDE. When it was decided that a new city playground and public restroom facility was a priority, the Melvern PRIDE worked with the city to lay the groundwork for the project. A grant was received and the community pitched in to raise the $25,000 to match the grant. Citizens donated time and resources to accomplish the goals. Volunteers stepped forward to help install all of the playground equipment and build the restrooms. The PRIDE group landscaped the area, and the result is a fantastic new place in town to recreate, relax, or have a picnic while the kids play.

Stockton Pride Gets Tired — Cleaning up the community took a special effort in Stockton. The Stockton Pride program sponsored an “Old Tire Collection and Disposal” project. The project was intended to aid with cleaning up yard clutter, but also had a public health benefit. Removal of old tires eliminated breeding places for mosquito, thus reducing the risk of West Nile Virus spread through the area. Public response was almost overwhelming, as nearly 2,000 old tires were collected. This was a great way to keep the city of Stockton neat and healthy!

Park City Pride goes to School — Chisholm Trail Elementary School in Park City, Kansas, faced low-test scores and poor community support. Principal Elbert McGhee came to the Park City PRIDE for help, telling members that individual tutoring was the most reliable way to raise student test scores quickly. PRIDE members went into action. An old school locker-room was the only area available for tutoring and required some paint and improvements to become a welcoming place. PRIDE member, Carol Flower made curtains to hide the plumbing facilities in the locker room, and Dee Stuart brought in plants and new signs to brighten the entryway. Then the team set about recruiting tutors. They manned recruitment tables at enrollment, talking to parents and grandparents about the rewards of tutoring. They went out into the community, even recruiting Wichita Thunder hockey players as tutors.

What was the result of their efforts? Sixty students were tutored once a week in the first year. The fifth grade test scores improved — in one year — more than 15 percent across the board in reading, writing, and math.

Mural Highlights History of Cunningham — A large mural greets travelers that drive Highway 54 each day as they pass through Cunningham, Kansas. Thanks to donations from the community and the work of the PRIDE committee. The mural depicts the history of the area from its pioneer beginnings in 1885 to the importance of agriculture in the present. Gene Weinland, a Pratt County Artist, used historical photos from the local museum as a basis for the preliminary sketches. He added several images of Kansas that included the meadowlark, waving wheat, barbed-wire fence, cottonwood tress and sunflowers. It was unified with a wonderful Kansas sky. The PRIDE committee reports many positive comments and feel that it gives traveler another reason to stop and spend time in Cunningham.

New Address for the K-State PRIDE Office — On July 1, the Kansas PRIDE office moved from 6-A Edwards to 101 Umberger Hall at KSU. The new address for your correspondence is:

Kansas PRIDE Program
101 Umberger Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66506

Don’t forget to check out our Web site www.kansasprideprogram.ksu.edu
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: Ruth Smerchek at (785) 296-3485; Dan Kahl at (785) 532-5840

Although the new PRIDE year just started, it’s never too early to start thinking about becoming a “Community of Excellence” award winner. The PRIDE staff will introduce you to a new tool that will assist you year-round in preparing for the “Community of Excellence” evaluation and documenting the success of your PRIDE activities, as well as fulfill your reporting requirements for the PRIDE program. This is a must for all PRIDE officers.

Penny for Your Thoughts

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The workshops are free to Enrolled PRIDE Communities, and will take place in the following locations:

August 16: Potwin 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Potwin Community Center, 201 N. Miller
August 17: Grinnell 1 to 3 p.m. Catholic Center, 302 S. Monroe
August 17: Lucas 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Lucas Theatre, 116 S. Main
August 18: Topeka 1 to 3 p.m. Shawnee Co. Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Ave
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