



GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

Working Together to Grow a Vibrant Phelps County Economy

#GROW 37

Phelps County, Nebraska

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PCDC Postpones Annual Meeting

PCDC's annual meeting set for Thursday, March 19, was postponed due to COVID-19 concerns.

PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said a new meeting date will be determined later.

"With the interests of our honorees and investors in mind, we decided it was better to delay this event," Tillery said.

The decision was made after consulting with PCDC's Executive Committee and reviewing public recommendations from the CDC.



"It is important for those locally-based businesses that have global markets that we err on the side of caution rather than take unnecessary risks," Tillery said.

Two local companies with worldwide connections, Becton-Dickinson and Glion Electric Scooters, were selected as the 2020 Phelps County Business Hall of Fame honorees and were to be recognized at the event.

Keynote speaker Dave Rippe of Hastings planned to speak on the theme "Do Epic Stuff: Never Underestimate the Power of Thinking Small." Rippe has said he will give the keynote address at a later time when the event is rescheduled.

2020 BUSINESS HALL OF FAME

BECTON-DICKINSON

Holdrege's Largest Employer Honored

In the mid-1960s, Phelps County leaders had the vision to grow Holdrege.

They heard about a company that wanted to expand in Nebraska, and they took action to recruit Beckon-Dickinson to Phelps County.

BD started its Holdrege operations on October 16, 1966, in a 12,000-square-foot building with 66 employees. Today, BD's facility spans close to 400,000 square feet, and it has grown to become the county's largest employer with more than 600 workers in a variety of well-paying jobs. The Holdrege BD plant is the world's largest producer of insulin syringes, manufacturing more than 2 billion syringes each year and millions of other devices that are distributed around the world.

In the past 10 years, BD has invested more than \$300 million in plant upgrades and expansions in the



BD has recently invested more than \$300 million in the Holdrege manufacturing plant.

Holdrege plant. In October, BD announced an additional \$40 million investment that will create another 35 new jobs, which will bring the total local employment close to 650.

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GLION ELECTRIC SCOOTERS

Glion 'Scoots' Into Business Hall of Fame



Robert McCormick

Electric scooters for adults are gaining popularity in cities around the world, where millennials are choosing this form of transportation for its low cost and energy-saving benefits.

And although there are just a few scooters zipping down the streets of Holdrege, a local company is one of the leading sellers of li-ion powered adult electric scooters on Amazon.

Glion Electric Scooters was at the forefront of producing electric scooters for adults and has a patent

on its Dolly foldable electric scooter. The company is owned by Holdrege resident Robert McCormick and his business partners Jeff Kong and Wei Chang, who live in the Chicago area.

Glion has doubled sales each year since its 2014 Kickstarter campaign to launch the business and now employs 10 full and part-time employees at its downtown Holdrege service center in the F. Johnson Building.

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Trusted Handshake Featured in PCDC's New Logo Design

One of the highlights planned for the now postponed PCDC annual meeting was to be the unveiling of the organization's new logo.

PCDC went ahead with the roll-out of the new logo in late March despite the meeting being postponed due to COVID-19 concerns.



Ron Tillery

The PCDC board unanimously approved the logo, which was designed internally, at its February board meeting. The new logo features a blue color scheme with the main icon being a handshake.

"We wanted to create a logo that was in keeping with our mission and a logo that clearly telegraphed what our purpose is all about," said PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery. "The trusted handshake exemplifies the Nebraska spirit. It is a graphic that conveys the spirit of how people do business in central Nebraska. It also tells people that we are good partners and hopefully from that, they draw the conclusion that we are open for business."

The previous logo featured a purple and yellow color scheme, while the new logo features various shades of blue.

"We adjusted the color palette to reflect a more contemporary and fresh look," Tillery said. "And, it is also a color scheme that can be adaptable to a variety of media." The new logo can easily be changed to black-and-white or single-color versions to be used in a variety of ways, including on apparel and print and online

platforms.

Tillery said that many economic development logos tend to highlight geography.

"We wanted a logo that was distinctive and stood out from other economic development logos," Tillery said. "While our name and place are important, the icon doesn't necessarily refer to geography or a place. It's about a spirit and how we go about doing business."

The handshake icon will appear in a variety of designs outside of the logo, including in the masthead of the GO! NEWS, to unify PCDC's messaging.

PCDC has also developed supporting graphics for each of its GO! programs that include the new logo elements. Those programs include GO! DREAM, GO! HOME, GO!BUILD, GO! WORK and GO! BUSINESS.

The GO! part of the programs is an acronym for Growing Opportunities.



"In this case, we updated the GO graphics to resemble the 'on' button on many computers, which again indicates that we are on and open for business," Tillery said.

The new logo has already been incorporated into most of PCDC's publications, letterhead and signage. A website redesign with the new logo is scheduled to debut later this spring.

Holdrege's Largest Employer Selected For Honor

Continued from page 1

Because of those recent investments, along with BD's strong community support through donations and volunteer work, its support of economic development efforts and its dedication to providing scholarships and apprenticeships to area students, PCDC has selected BD as a 2020 Business Hall of Fame honoree.

PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said the leaders who recruited BD to Holdrege 54 years ago were big thinkers who weren't afraid to "do epic stuff."

"I know only fragments of BD's history and how they came to select Holdrege, but I'm guessing civic leaders took a leap of faith to win the project," he said.

That kind of big thinking is what it will take to grow Holdrege into the future, Tillery said.

"The payoff may not be fully realized in our lifetimes, but what we do today will sculpt the community that Holdrege will be in 50 years,"



BD and Glion will receive trophies, and their businesses will be on the Business Hall of Fame wall in the PCDC office.

Tillery said. "We can't afford to think small because that's what we will get."

Tillery said that BD has been an excellent partner in economic development efforts. In 2017, BD was recognized nationally by the "Trade & Industry Development" magazine with a CiCi Award (Corporate Investment and Community Impact). It was one of 15 companies, including

Amazon and Microsoft, to receive the award.

BD also supports local students. The company recently started offering scholarships and an apprenticeship program to give area students a chance to earn a college education and to help BD in efforts to recruit a talented local workforce.

"Our goal is to help students who live in this area to start their careers and get going," said BD's Human Resources Manager Brian Deakin. "I'm passionate about keeping our kids home and giving them great opportunities and growing our area."

Deakin said recent investments in the Holdrege plant show the confidence that BD has in the local operations and employees.

BD also is a leader in the Central Nebraska Manufacturing Area Sector Partnership, a coalition of regional manufacturers, schools, Central Community College and other agencies formed to overcome challenges to growing the local economy, such as transportation, workforce development and training. Deakin helped organize the group and is excited about the progress made so far.

Glion 'Scoots' Into Phelps County Business Hall of Fame

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Because of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Glion's owners, its international partnership, and its quickly growing nationwide customer base and dealer network, the Phelps County Development Corporation has chosen it as a 2020 Business Hall of Fame honoree.

"Robert McCormick has taken a big leap of faith in his entrepreneurial effort at Glion," PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said. "The high-tech micro-mobility product exemplifies the creativity and ingenuity of our region. It is a perfect example of a local entrepreneurial company."

McCormick said he is "shocked and humbled" by the honor.

He said the business was "totally a leap of faith."

"Doubling our revenue every year has been a critical and important success," McCormick said. "The Glion Dolly electric scooter is recognized as a top commuter scooter on Amazon. Amazon is an amazing but competitive platform. You have to

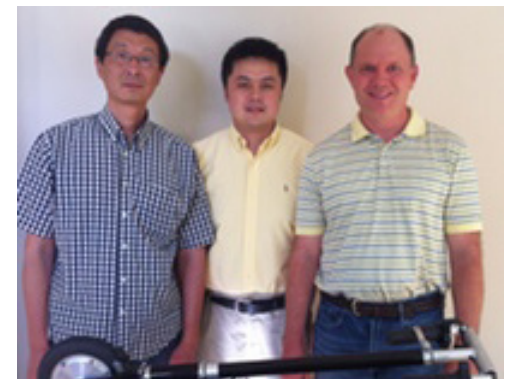
earn your success on it each and every day."

McCormick and his business partner, Jeff Kong, met when they were both working on a solar energy project for clients in California. They both share a passion for business and a concern for climate change. They wanted to create a product using a lithium-ion battery.

They found their niche in a foldable electric scooter for adults. Luckily, in the past few years, electric scooter rentals have been booming in major cities around the country. That trend has fueled the desire for more people to purchase their own electric scooters, and since Glion has been in the market for six years now, the company is catching a great share of sales.

Glion also produces a three-wheeled foldable SNAPnGO Electric Travel Mobility Scooter that has a seat and appeals to the 55+ population.

Both products are engineered and manufactured in China, where Jeff and Wei grew up. The scooters are then shipped and stored in Los Angeles until they are ordered. Most of the sales originate on Amazon, as well as the



From right: Robert McCormick and his Glion business partners Jeff Kong and Wei Chang.

company website www.glion-scooter.com.

The administrative, customer service, marketing and repair operations are based out of Holdrege, where the employee base has been rapidly expanding the past few years.

"We're really pleased with the people we have been able to add on our team here and the skills they bring to the table," McCormick said.

TAKING ACTION ON HOUSING SHORTAGE

PCDC Grants Encourage Local Couples To Rehab Homes

Instead of just talking about the housing shortage in Phelps County, two local couples decided to take action.

Chris and Heather McQuillan and Joe and Christine Ridder have recently formed CJHC Properties, LLC, a company that buys and rehabs homes to sell or rent.

“We are trying to change the housing situation in Phelps County behind the scenes,” Chris McQuillan said. “We got tired of people constantly talking about our housing issue. Now, we are taking action and trying to provide safe, sound and secure homes for people.”

PCDC helped spur the plan one year ago when the McQuillans and the Ridders each applied for and received PCDC grants to rehab and sell a home. One of those homes is now sold, and the other is closing soon. Also, the couples have purchased and rehabbed six rental homes in Phelps County to help fill that demand.

PCDC recently awarded the new combined CJHC Properties, LLC, a GO! HOME 3.1 Renovation Reimbursement grant of \$1,500 for a Loomis project. CJHC purchased a home at 106 Lowell with a goal of refreshing and remodeling it in about eight weeks from start to finish.

It is a 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home with a one-car attached garage on a double lot. On the outside, the plan is to paint the exterior, install a new front porch and clean up the yard. The interior will be a complete remodel with high-end finishes, a new kitchen and bathrooms, refinished wood floors and a fresh coat of paint, along with plumbing and electrical fixture upgrades.

McQuillan said the home will be listed in the \$130,000-\$140,000 price range, depending on the final few bids for finishes.

While they considered rehabbing the home as a rental, McQuillan said area Realtors advised that owner-occupied homes are moving fast and are in high demand in Loomis.

“The PCDC grants gave us the confidence to move forward on these projects,” McQuillan said.

McQuillan said the paperwork he completed for the rehab and resale grant was simple and required only about 30 minutes.



PCDC awarded a GO! HOME renovation and reimbursement grant to CJHC Properties, LLC, to rehab and resell this home at 106 Lowell Street in Loomis.

The Ridders and McQuillans purchase the majority of their building supplies locally. They also hire local sub-contractors whenever possible.

Although PCDC grants don't cover rental home rehab, CJHC plans to move forward with fixing up more rental homes in the county, too.

“If you own your home, that's one unit you can clean up,” McQuillan said. “If you are willing to own rental properties, you can really make a change in more neighborhoods.”

And the local demand for rental homes is still high. When McQuillan advertises a new rental home being available, he typically receives about 25 inquiries from potential renters.

“There's a huge need,” he said. “And, it's not just local renters. We will get people messaging from Kearney and Hastings about relocations.”

The first year of rehabbing, renting and selling homes has been a success for the Ridders and McQuillans, and they are hoping to pick up momentum in the next several years and would be interested in meeting with potential local investors who could help them buy and rehab more homes to fill the local demand.



PCDC provides three types of GO! HOME grants:

- 1) **Contractors New Build or Rehab for Resale grants**, which include lot-clearing grants
- 2) **Residential Exterior Improvement Grants** for new or current residents purchasing new homes
- 3) **Employee New Resident Relocation Down Payment Assistance grants** (must be coordinated through an employer)

For more information and grant applications for the GO! HOME program, please visit the website at www.phelpscountyne.com/relocate/go!-home-programs

Engaging Young Leaders

New Leadership Program Participants Connect and Learn About Community

Strength assessments and understanding how a public school systems operates are just two of the many lessons learned so far in the inaugural Leadership Holdrege class.

Eleven young leaders were selected for the new program, which aims to inspire, connect, educate and engage leaders within Phelps County to make a stronger impact in the workplace and community for tomorrow.

Ashley Popple, business manager of Popple Construction, said she applied for the class to be more involved in the community.

Leadership Holdrege is divided into six sessions on the following topics: Gallup Strength Finders; government, education and community investment; industry and agriculture; natural resources, including a Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District water tour; and economic development, medical and business.

"I feel each session has been truly impactful, but as a business owner, I feel the Gallup Strength Finders and the foundations of leadership training sessions really had valuable information," Popple said. "Those sessions help explain personality differences and how to use those to strengthen your team to provide better services to your community."

She discovered her top five strengths are Responsibility, Consistency, Relator, Individualization and Harmony.

"These didn't surprise me as much as they did confirm and give me more information about what I already know about myself," she said.

Popple and her husband, Casey, own Popple Construction. The company, which has five employees, specializes in flatwork concrete consisting of driveways, sidewalks, bin floors, garage floors, basement floors, building floors and more.

Because of what she has learned and the connections she has made in Leadership Holdrege, Popple is joining the CASA board.



"In wanting to get more involved, the opportunity to join the CASA board came up and I jumped for it," Popple said. "For me, serving on a board for an organization that advocates for children makes my heart full."

Leah Gleason, who is a new attorney at Fye Law Office in Holdrege, said she also has enjoyed the new connections she's made as part of the program and was most impacted by the session on education.

"I had no idea what went into running a public school system," Gleason said. "There are so many needs for the school system that we were able to learn about. We were able to learn from a few local school board members and pick their brains on what goes on and what is required for a school to function."

As a newcomer to Holdrege, Gleason has appreciated the opportunity to learn about the community.

"I was shocked that Glion Scooters was such a huge company that sells so many products across the country, and its headquarters is just down the street from my office!" she said. "It just goes to show how many wonderful things happen in a small town."

Gleason said the class has also inspired her to become more involved in the community.

"I'm not quite sure how yet, but once I find the right project, I know the best people to contact to get it started," she said.

The Leadership Holdrege class wraps up in May with a graduation ceremony. The project is led by Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce's education committee with help from area partners, including the Phelps County Development Corporation and Central Community College.

Trade Area Report Shows Opportunity For Area Retailers

A recent trade area study revealed major areas of opportunity for current or new retailers in the Phelps County trade area.

Retail Strategies, PCDC's new retail recruitment consulting partner, completed the study to help identify the biggest retail needs in the county.

"Our market has tremendous opportunity for those people who are willing to take the risk and capture that opportunity," said PCDC's Executive Director Ron Tillery.

The trade area consists of an estimated population base of 33,570 that surrounds Holdrege and extends to Arapahoe to the west; Norton, Kan., and Smith Center, Kan., to the south; Minden to the east; and Elm Creek to the north. The study shows opportunities where there is a gap between the amount of money consumers are spending on products versus the amount they are spending on those products locally.

Tillery said some of the biggest opportunities exist in the following categories:

- Drugs/health/cosmetics and beauty (\$47 million gap)
- Grocery and food items (\$35.7 million gap)
- Furniture (\$10 million gap)
- Sporting goods (\$7 million gap)
- Automotive fuels (\$12.5 million gap)

"Our goal with the retail development shortage is to help existing businesses capture some of that market," Tillery said.

If existing retailers aren't able to fill the gap, that's where PCDC will focus its new retail recruitment efforts.





Investment Club Gives Return On Community Projects

Local residents learned about community investment clubs at a recent gathering organized by PCDC.

Cliff Mesner, an attorney and developer from Central City, shared the history and success of the Central City investment club.

Mesner said he and a group of other investors started the club more than 25 years ago when they realized they needed venture capital to attract projects to town.

Venture capital is often needed for start-ups and emerging companies that have a high probability of success but not enough funds to launch. Central City wanted to have money ready and available because it is more difficult to raise the funds in a hurry.

The Central City investment club members each committed to giving \$100 a month to set aside and have available when a project was proposed. It started with 23 investors, and they intended to make investments in the community that would benefit both the investors and the community as a whole.

The first large investment was bringing a Super 8 Motel to town. The hotel was a success and was sold after 13 years to a new owner.

The club also invested in a local farm store building to keep a business in town, an assisted-living facility and several single-family spec homes to boost the housing supply in town.

Mesner said he has averaged about a 5 percent return on his investment over the years.

"I am personally happy with the way things have gone," Mesner said. "You can do better investing in Berkshire-Hathaway, but Berkshire-Hathaway isn't going to do anything for the community."

June Opening Predicted For New Cobblestone Inn & Suites

Hotel Now Taking Fall Reservations

Construction on the Cobblestone Inn & Suites in Holdrege is right on schedule with a tentative open date of late June.

"We are still hoping to be done with construction sometime in early June, and if all goes as planned, we hope to open by the end of June," said Jeremy Griesbach, the company's president of development.

After an October groundbreaking, construction began on the new \$4 million, 45-room, two-story hotel in November. It is located at 814 Burlington on the busy Highway 183 corridor.

Crews have worked seven days a week throughout the winter to complete the project in time for the busy summer travel season.

"It's just what we do," Griesbach said. "That's all we do is build Cobblestone Hotels."

They are also building a new hotel in Cozad and have some shared crews on the two projects.

Griesbach said hiring for the hotel staff will begin in mid- to late- April with most of the staff hired 30-60 days before opening. He said they will hire an equivalent of 8-10 full-time employees, which could mean a mix of several full or part-time employees that would push the total

employee number higher.

Anyone with an interest in applying to work at the new hotel is encouraged to reach out to Andrew Wright at awright@whgco.com.

The Holdrege Cobblestone is currently accepting reservations for stays after September 1 on the hotel's website at www.staycobblestone.com/ne/holdrege. If anyone needs to reserve rooms in July or August (for weddings or reunions), they can do so by contacting Andrew Wright as well. July and August single-stay reservation dates will open on the website after a solid opening date is set.

"Everything is on schedule," Griesbach said. "We are excited to get up and running and hopefully be a great asset to Holdrege."

Anyone making reservations to stay at the Cobblestone is encouraged to sign up for the hotel's rewards program to earn free hotel stays or gift certificates to major retailers like Amazon and Starbucks.

The hotel has a Facebook page (Cobblestone Inn & Suites – Holdrege) where fans can follow for the latest information on construction, hiring and opening updates.



The new Cobblestone Inn & Suites at 814 Burlington has started accepting reservations for stays after September 1. The hotel is expected to open in June. (Photo taken mid-March)

Skiles Returns to Hometown as Lundeen-Isaacson Agent

Gavin Skiles is the newest insurance agent at Lundeen-Isaacson Insurance.

Skiles graduated from Holdrege High School in 2009 and then received a bachelor's degree in business administration and business education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He worked as an insurance agent in Arizona and then worked for three years teaching high school business/



Gavin Skiles

technology at Cozad High School.

He earned his master's degree in business administration from Wayne State College in the spring of 2019 and began working at Lundeen-Isaacson in May.

"I'm happy to be back in the Holdrege community," Skiles said. "I love the opportunity to get to work with customers from my hometown area."

When he's not working, Skiles enjoys fishing, golfing and traveling near and far to attend Husker football games.

Morten, Johnson Purchase Holdrege Dairy Queen

Kelly Morten and Stacey Johnson are the new owners of the Holdrege Dairy Queen. Kelly and Stacy purchased the business from previous owners DeAnn and Steven Vaughn March 1.

Kelly, who is DeAnn's brother, has previously worked as Dairy Queen's property manager, and Stacey was the General Manager. They will both continue in their previous roles now as then new owners.

Since purchasing the business, Johnson and Morten owners have already made a few slight changes, including painting the dining room and widening the drive-thru lane to prevent tires from driving up on the curb. Morten said future changes will include a new register system, and in 2023 they will refresh the building's exterior to align with national Dairy Queen branding updates.

Morten and Johnson also own and manage the Dairy Queen in Cozad, which they purchased two years ago.

Jeremiah Johnson New Owner of Central Valley Irrigation

Central Valley Irrigation changed ownership in January. Jeremiah Johnson purchased the business from Monty and Tammy Vonasek, who had owned the business for 13 years.

Johnson began work at Central Valley in 1998 as a service technician. He earned an associate's degree in electrical technology at Central Community College in 2000 and is a licensed electrician. Prior to becoming the owner of the company, he was the project manager.

Monty Vonasek remains on staff as the sales manager, and Tammy remains on staff in accounting/office support.

Central Valley Irrigation is based in Holdrege and has offices in Lexington and Kearney. More than 40 employees work for the company, including a team of Valmont-certified center pivot service technicians.

Terry Gerdes started Central Valley Irrigation in Holdrege in 1980, and the Vonaseks purchased the business in 2007. They opened the Lexington location in 2006, and the Kearney location was added in 2012.

Gerdes is also still employed at Central Valley as the parts manager.

Graddy Joins Sales Team at Heritage Agency

Angela Graddy has joined the Heritage Agency as its newest Realtor.

Graddy is originally from Funk and graduated from Holdrege High School in 2004. She earned her Realtor's license in September 2019 and began work at the Heritage Agency in October.



Angela Graddy

She previously worked at the Walmart Vision Center and at UNMC Ophthalmology in Omaha and Lind Eyecare in Kearney and was a stay-at-home mom to her four children ages 3-12.

Her husband, Paul, is a farmer, and they live near Funk where she grew up.

"I wanted to become a Realtor because I wanted to help people achieve their dream of home ownership, helping them find a place they love and are excited to call home," Graddy said.

She is involved in the women's ministry at Grace Fellowship in Kearney and enjoys volleyball, basketball, running and hanging out with family.



PCDC would like to congratulate Southern Public Power District on the opening of its new service center in Funk. The new office opened on Monday, February 17. SPPD's previous service center building in Holdrege is for sale.



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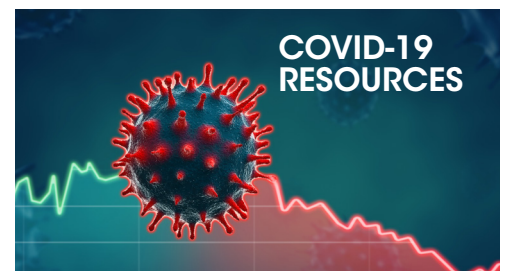
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PCDC Seeks Solutions for Local Businesses

With many local businesses closing their doors temporarily to help slow the spread of COVID-19, PCDC is researching ways to help overcome any local financial hardships associated with the worldwide pandemic.

"We are evaluating the needs of our main-street businesses and will be and looking to connect business owners with appropriate responses," PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said. "First, we need to determine the needs and then we will consider what role PCDC can play to help them through the crisis. We don't want to lose any local businesses due to this temporary emergency."

Tillery recommends that business owners visit a coronavirus resource page compiled by the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry at



nechamber.com/coronavirus-update.

The page contains the latest information on the virus, including insurance benefits and details on disaster assistance loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration.

"We will continue to do what we can to share resources to help businesses in our county survive this crisis," Tillery said.