

# GROWING OPPORTUNITIES GEONETAL PHELPS COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

## McClymont Selected As Priceless Pick

Sherry McClymont has been selected as the Phelps County Development Corporation's 2022 President's Priceless Pick.

The award is given annually to someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in economic development.

PCDC Board President Phil Hinrichs selected McClymont for her work in championing a campaign to improve the appearance and livability of the community.

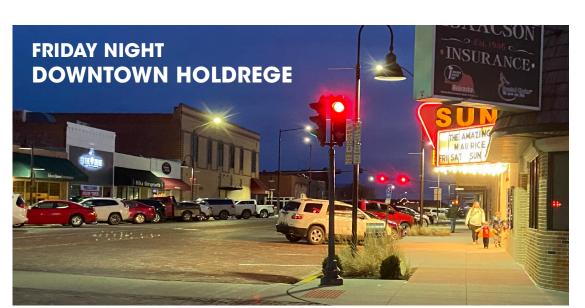
"Sherry and a like-minded band have championed a drive to eliminate vacant commercial buildings and houses," Hinrichs said. "She's also leading an effort to create a new downtown sculpture garden and performance space."

<sup>'</sup> McClymont said she loves being part of the Holdrege community.

"The most important part of Holdrege is the people." McClymont said. "I want to be part of showing how much we care about each other, now and into the future."







# GO! DREAM Grants Help Bring Downtown Holdrege to Life Again

On a recent Saturday night, the streets of downtown Holdrege filled with vehicles as residents and visitors enjoyed a movie at the renovated Sun Theater and Events Venue, cocktails and indoor golf at The Drive Golf & Lounge, craft brews at Lost Way Brewery and delicious meals at JB's Sports Bar & Grill and Catrinas Mexican Cuisine.

The Phelps County Development Corporation has focused on creating vitality in Phelps County downtowns over the past five years with its GO! DREAM grants, and the investment has become more visible after a robust 2022 that included several new downtown business openings with more on the way.

"With these investments and business startups come more visible activity, which provides confidence in others to expand or start something new," PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said. "The community can feel it. More people are enjoying everything that downtown has to offer: movies, dining out, entertainment, and shopping. It's like throwing a pebble into a pond – its ripples radiate through the community."

In 2022, the following businesses opened, sold to new owners or moved to downtown Holdrege: The Drive Golf & Lounge, Catrinas Mexican Cuisine, Turner Technology, Twin Dragon Martial Arts, Wholesale Specialists "The Bin Store," Holdrege Day Spa, and Graphic Arts Shop. In addition, the Sun Theater reopened in April after extensive renovations.

Not all of these businesses applied for PCDC grants, but PCDC may have helped in other ways, such as location-finding assistance or connecting owners to business mentors and other resources to help them succeed.

In the downtown living scene in 2022, the new owner of the Schrock Building renovated four apartments, and the Dale Residences continues its transformation with the first renters expected in the next few months. These spaces are in addition to the Iron Horse Flats project, which was one of PCDC's first GO! DREAM grant recipients in 2018.

And, more changes are on the way with a new Midtown Sculpture Garden planned and an expansion of The 308 Boutique.

Since 2018, PCDC has invested \$313,000 in downtown Holdrege

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## **G**ROWING **O**PPORTUNITIES

#### Phelps County Communities:

Bertrand Atlanta

Holdrege

Loomis

Atlanta

Holdrege's new multi-million dollar baseball/ softball complex is one year closer to becoming reality.

In 2022, lighting and field drainage work were completed on the new fields on 18th Street across from the Holdrege Country Club golf course.

Holdrege City Administrator Chris Rector said



they opened bids in mid-March for the final grading, irrigation and seeding. Once those projects are completed, only fencing and concrete work remain before the facility can open for play in 2024 or 2025.

The citv began construction on the project in 2018. Rector said the project is taking several

vears to complete because a financial plan for the field was not clear from the beginning. Most of the funds for the complex are coming from the city's park and recreation budget.

In 2021, the City established a City of Holdrege Parks & Recreation Fund at the Phelps County Community Foundation to encourage charitable

#### continued from page 1

through GO! DREAM grants. That investment has resulted in more than \$2 million in private investment in downtown Holdrege in five vears.

different each year but ultimately support business owners who are creating downtown living units and improving the exterior appeal of existing businesses or starting a new business.

"We've made a concerted effort to renovate downtown building facades and improve their structural integrity," Tillery said. "PCDC's investment has helped stimulate private investment by more than a five to-one ratio. Consequently, that investment has led to more business activity including more new businesses. Brick by brick, we're building vitality in the community.'

2022

### • JB's Sports Bar & Grill

- Screen Machine • SCAR
  - Schrock Building
  - The 308 Boutique
  - The Drive Golf & Lounge
  - 2021
- 6th Avenue Flats Holdrege Physical Therapy • SCAR
- The 308 Boutique
- The Blue Vine
- The Dale Residences

### 2020

- Wagner Irrigation
- ruralMed
- KUVR/NE Rural Radio

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# Workforce, Housing, Ag Industrial **Growth Top PCDC Agenda for 2023**

Funk

Brick by brick, the Phelps County economy continues to grow.

Increased retail sales, a growing labor force and millions of dollars in construction projects bolstered the local economy in 2022. PCDC investors learned about that growth and the organization's priorities for 2023 at the annual meeting Tuesday, February 28.

PCDC Board President Phil Hinrichs shared highlights of PCDC's work in 2022 as housing and workforce development continued to be top priorities.

More than 2,200 employees commute to work in Holdrege each day, Hinrichs said.

"That's a big opportunity for us," he said. "Each new employee who chooses to live in Phelps County brings a family with a spouse and kids who can enter the workforce.'

PCDC has taken the lead on housing by developing the new Crew Subdivision, which is nearly complete. The organization is now partnering with the City of Holdrege on a new housing development that could include 26 new living units.

Long-time PCDC Board Member Tim Rehm retired from the board, and Allison Fritsche of Holdrege was elected in his place.

Hinrichs passed the president's gavel to new PCDC Board President Shane Westcott.

Community service has been a major part of Allison Fritsche's life for the past 10 years, and

now she is aivina her time as PCDC's

"Economic growth is important to me so for professionals to come and stay and to appeal to our youth to come back and

build their lives here someday, too," Fritsche said.

She has worked at Glenwood Technology for 10 years, and her current title is Sales Engineer/ Public Relations



Shane Westcott, Tim Rehm and Phil Hinrichs

"During the time I've been on the PCDC board, I've seen tremendous progress in Phelps County." Westcott said. "We need to take advantage of our momentum to ensure that future generations can enjoy the things that make this place special, just like our ancestors have done."

Westcott said his priorities as president will be similar to years past with a focus on housing and the workforce.

"In addition, PCDC will increase its focus on making our area the premiere location for aq-industrial growth," Westcott said. "Food processing, commodity processing ... the things that build value from our natural resources and the expertise of our farm community."

Fritsche said she will bring to the board strong

networking and relationships, open-mindedness,

a solid work ethic, the ability to have an honest

discussion in all circumstances, and experience

past president of the Holdrege Rotary Club, is a

Holdrege Area Chamber Ambassador and vouth

group leader at the First Presbyterian Church in

Area Chamber of Commerce board of directors

including short commutes, safe communities,

excellent schools and access to health care. a

network of skilled professionals willing to work

together daily, a sense of belonging and ample

and the Concrete Solutions Committee.

opportunities to give back.

Holdrege. She previously served on the Holdrege

Fritsche said Phelps County has many assets

She currently serves as the membership chair/

on previous boards.

# Fritsche Elected to PCDC Board of Directors

newest board member.

our county can remain relevant and attractive

**Allison Fritsche** 

# Downtown

**Chris Rector** 

renovations and new dwelling creation

"Now, more people are living downtown, eating and shopping downtown," Tillery said.

The GO! DREAM grants have been slightly

PHELPS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Bertrand

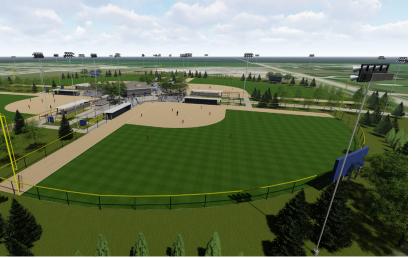
Funk

Holdrege

Loomis

**G**<sup>(</sup>C) NEWS

# Baseball/Softball Complex One Year Closer to Opening



Final grading, seeding and irrigation work are planned for Holdrege's new baseball/softball complex in 2023. The facility could open for play as early as 2024.

giving toward the project. In addition, PCCF donated \$250,000 toward the complex.

The Phelps County Development Corporation (PCDC) announced several years ago its pledge of \$75,000 per year over 15 years (\$1.125 million)

to the project. Those funds are being applied to the first phases of the complex, including the restroom/ concession stand.

The new complex will include two softball fields and two baseball fields, batting cages and dugouts.

## **GO! DREAM GRANTS DOWNTOWN HOLDREGE**



### 2019

- Lincoln Federal Bank
- Shelter Insurance Building
- evolve Fitness Center
- Anderson, Klein, Brewster & Brandt Law Office
- Fye Properties
- Screen Machine

### 2018

- Iron Horse Flats
- Opera House
- Palmer Bros. Granite

For information about GO! DREAM grants, visit www.phelpscountyne.com

## **G**ROWING **O**PPORTUNITIES

#### Phelps County Communities:

Atlanta Bertrand

Loomis

Funk

Atlanta



# Future Looks BRIGHT at Allmand Inc. Strong Product Demand Leads to 100 New Employees

Two years ago, Allmand Inc. had about 130 employees and was seeking to hire at least 50 more to meet the growing demand for its products.

Since then, the Holdrege manufacturer has hired 100 employees and is gearing up for another record-setting year with a staff of 228 people.

Vice President and General Manager David Dooley said because of Allmand's "phenomenal success with our products" the company has been able to offer a more competitive benefits package.

"Overall, it is a great company to work for with a great work environment focusing on safety and integrity," Dooley said.

Allmand engaged its staff by offering an employee golf league and sponsoring staff teams for adult bowling and softball leagues. They also cook on-site monthly for employees and offered a Christmas raffle with close to \$20,000 in gifts.

Last fall. Allmand started an English as a Second Language program to further boost employee hiring efforts. It began with 12-15 temporary non-English speaking staff and continued to grow.

"Since that time, we are proud to say that more than 25 of those employees have transitioned from temporary to full-time status," HR Manager

Shannon Busch said.

Allmand staff have translated work documents into Spanish and identified bilingual translators in the plant to ensure that everyone can understand each other. They have regular orientations in Spanish, use translator apps and are researching additional technology to help with communication.

"This program has helped us become fully staffed, which in turn has helped increase production," Busch said. "We have learned a lot, and our employees have stepped up to the plate and helped overcome our challenges."

Allmand continues to seek employees as product demand grows.

"In particular, we have a large demand for welders, fabricators, material handlers, and engineers," Busch said, "We are looking for people who are willing to work hard, learn and grow with our team."

Plant Manager Roy Fanning said the leadership team at Allmand works to create a family culture and recognize and appreciate employees.

"We are constantly looking at how we can improve, and our employees are a big part of that process and our success," Fanning said.

Allmand produces Towable Light Towers, heaters and generators used in the oil and gas, construction, mining and entertainment industries. The new General Rental 3KW and 6KW LC launched in the past two years, and Fanning said they are quickly becoming the most popular products manufactured at Allmand in Holdrege.

The company is working on several new products, including one using hybrid technology leveraging the Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Lithium Battery.

"2022 was a phenomenal record-setting year for safety, revenue and employee engagement," Dooley said. "This clearly establishes a strong outlook for the next few years."

Dooley said the order book for 2023 is full with orders in hand, and they are accepting 2024 orders. Allmand recently installed a new multimillion dollar laser cutting platform and expanded the fabrication shop.

"These are exciting times for Allmand, our employees, our customers and the Holdrege community," Dooley said

Allmand celebrates 85 years in business in 2023, an exciting milestone for the company and the community.

"We are very proud of our history and success and look forward to continuing that legacy," Busch said.

# **COMMUNITY PROFILE** Bertrand Residents Step Up to Make Town Thrive

Volunteers Solving Housing, Daycare & Workforce Shortages

A new aquatic center and yoga studio, a thriving downtown with an art gallery, a beautiful golf course and fun events like concerts, an annual rodeo and a New Year's Eve party.

These may sound like big city amenities, but they are all part of the small-town life in Bertrand, Nebraska, population 704.

Bertrand residents are forward-thinkers who give endlessly of their time, talents and treasures to ensure their community remains vibrant and safe, attracts new residents and has a thriving future.

Beverly Hansen is one of those residents. She moved back to her hometown in 2008 after a long career in banking and finance, and like many Bertrand residents, volunteers much of her time to community improvement.

"I just have a good feeling about serving the community and wanting other people to receive and take advantage of all the things my hometown has given me over the years," Hansen said.

Some of the projects she and others have been tackling recently include childcare and housing shortages and the future of skilled trades businesses in Bertrand.

Thanks to a grant from Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the community created the Bertrand Area Communities for Kids group to address the daycare shortage. They have partnered with the United Methodist Church in Bertrand to renovate space in the church for a new childcare center. This initiative also led to a partnership with the Don Sjogren Community YMCA to offer an after-school program for schoolage kids at the Hi-Line Golf Course clubhouse.

#### **Bertrand Community Builders**

Residents have also acted on solving a housing shortage in their community by forming Bertrand Community Builders, an investment club whose goal is to create more housing.

In the last four months of 2022, 64 investors stepped up to be part of the investment club. Their initial \$1,000 investments plus now the monthly \$100 investments have given the group funds to start two home projects.

"When people really learned about the need for



Bertrand Brews & BBQ Volunteers: Back row left to right, Travis Kuck, Jared Holen, Tiffany Langford. Front Row from left Sam Lavene, Kristy Hock, Courtney Johnson. Pam Snyder, Christina Davison, Jennifer Weber. The 2023 Brews & BBQ Event will be June 24 and will feature country music entertainer Eric Paslay performing in downtown Bertrand.

adequate housing in Bertrand, they stepped up to the plate," Hansen said, including many former Bertrand residents.

The investment club purchased two run-down In addition to the investment club projects. Hansen said the community is also finding

homes, and members volunteered to tear one down and gut another for remodeling and reconstruction. the Bertrand Housing Authority is working with the South Central Economic Development District. Inc., to create five new rental units. PCDC approved a forgivable loan for the BHA to purchase property for the rentals. PCDC is also partnering with Bertrand groups to apply for grants to help construct more living units in the town. solutions for retaining trades businesses with the new Business Trades Peer Mentor Program. The Innovation Fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation awarded the community a \$10,000 grant to create a program to help those retiring from trade businesses (plumbing, electrical, construction, etc.) to find a new generation of workers/owners to stay in or move to Bertrand to transition the businesses.

Hansen is on the board of the new Bertrand Community Builders, and she also serves on

Holdrege

Loomis

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#### For the entire version of this story, visit www.phelpscountyne.com/in-the-news

the Bertrand Area Community Fund advisory committee. This fund, established in 2011, has awarded \$216,431 in grants to Bertrand projects in the past decade. Hansen said it has sparked much of Bertrand's progress.

The Bertrand Area Community Fund contributed to the initial feasibility study for another major project recently completed in Bertrand, the new Aquatic Center.

#### **Bertrand Aquatic Center**

Matthew Gregg, Bertrand's Utilities Superintendent, said Bertrand's new \$2.7 million Aquatic Center opened in 2022, and it has brought even more pride to the community.

In addition to city funds, Bertrand residents raised more than \$300,000 for the new attraction

Gregg said Bertrand residents and the village have also worked to keep the community clean and the infrastructure updated and established a vacant home and building ordinance.

Downtown Bertrand is thriving, too, with the most recent addition being the new Studio 607 yoga business.

Bertrand is also striving to bring visitors to the community through new events like a Hallmark Christmas and a New Year's Eve party in addition to established events like the Bertrand Craft Show, Bertrand Fair & Rodeo and Brews & BBQ.

## **G**ROWING **O**PPORTUNITIES

Phelps County Communities:

Bertrand Atlanta

Funk

Holdrege Loomis Atlanta

## Keiser, APRN, Joins **Phelps Medical Group**

Rachel Keiser, APRN, has joined the care team at Phelps Medical Group. "I'm excited to be able to see and treat

patients in the family practice setting," Keiser



said. "Growing up in this area. I am able to understand and connect with the culture and rural lifestyle. I look forward to building relationships with my patients and facing healthcare challenges together." Keiser grew up near Naponee, where her

**Rachel Keiser** 

family has a farm and ranching operation. She now lives in Hildreth with her husband. Brooks.

Keiser received her undergraduate degree from Bryan College of Health Sciences and completed her graduate training at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

Previously, Keiser was seeing patients at St. Francis Specialty Clinic in conjunction with their neurology team. Her experience includes treating patients with epilepsy, headaches, strokes, neuropathy, dementia, movement disorders and more.

### Holdrege Police Department **Hires Community Service Officer**

Toni Furnish began work as the Holdege Police Department's new Community Service Officer in January. She is in charge of enforcing city ordinances including



and dogs, parking, etc. Her work is mainly noncriminal complaints and enforcement. Furnish, who is originally from Wray, Colo., started as a patrol officer for the HPD in

July 2022. She moved

those related to animals

Tori Furnish

to her new position in January. She was previously a stay-at-home mom and also worked at NAPA Auto Parts.

She said the ability to help others, adrenaline and adventure attracted her to police work.

Furnish is mom to three children ages 3-7 and spends most of her free time with the kids and following their sports and activities.

### Fairfield Native Begins New Role in 4-H

Calvin DeVries is the new 4-H Assistant Extension Educator for Phelps and Gosper counties. He started his new position in February after working for the past four years with Lancaster County Extension.

The Fairfield native participated in Adams County 4-H as a youth showing sheep, swine and poultry and creating wildlife and entomology projects. He graduated from Sandy Creek Public Schools. He earned an associate's degree from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis and then a bachelor's degree in animal science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. While in college, he participated on the Livestock Judging Teams.



He recently completed his Master of Applied Science degree. As part of his studies, he developed scripts for 4-H staff across the state to use while teaching ag literacy. While working as the Extension Assistant in Lancaster County, he coordinated an embryology program that reached almost 4,000 third graders from more than 60 schools.

"My wife, Jordyn, and I are excited to move to the Holdrege area and plant our roots in the community," DeVries said. "Jordyn is originally from Cozad. Our goal has always been to move closer to each of our roots, and this position has provided us with that opportunity. I look forward to sharing my passion for agriculture with youth in Phelps and Gosper counties to help build our leaders of tomorrow!"

### New Rodeway Inn Director Has Passion for Hospitality

Upjeet Singh Sahota is the new on-site Director of Business Development and Operations at the Rodeway Inn, 420 Broadway St., Holdrege.

Sahota is also a part-owner of Morpho Hotels and Resorts USA



The Rodeway Inn **Upjeet Singh Sahota** 

in Holdrege is the company's first hotel purchase in the United States. It is the first step toward the company's vision to expand in the United States and other international markets. The company also has offices in Spain and Dubai.

Sahota began his work in Holdrege in December 2022. He is originally from Chandigarh, India, where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics, geography and psychology in his hometown after high school. He then moved to Switzerland where he earned a post-graduate diploma in hospitality and tourism management and then to Providence, Rhode Island, where he earned an MBA in

Hospitality Administration from Johnson & Wales University. He has worked for several hotel chains including Starwood, Marriott, Hilton, Best Western, Wyndham, Sarovar and Radisson, and he opened the first Four Points by Sheraton hotel in Tanzania. Africa.

"My industry has given me the opportunity to travel the world," Sahota said. "I've worked on four different continents. I enjoy it because it's an industry where you can meet a lot of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, learn from them and take care of them. For me, guest satisfaction comes before anything else.'

Since purchasing the Rodeway Inn, Sahota has remodeled seven of the 38 rooms and renovated the indoor pool. He plans to remodel the rest of the rooms over the next few years.

"I'm very particular about cleanliness and having a comfortable place to stay," Sahota said. "Our industry is very simple; a clean room, a comfortable bed and a good hot shower.'

Sahota said his company chose the Holdrege hotel as its first U.S. purchase because of its location in a peaceful town and the consistency in the hotel's business with growth opportunities.

"I found Holdrege to be a nice, calm quaint little town with lovely people," Sahota said. "It's very welcoming. I like the calmness and the quiet, and the business environment was good in town."

Sahota and his wife. Nuvddip, have two boys: Aryaman, who will attend the University of Nebraska at Kearney in the fall, and Aryaveer, who will be in 8th grade. Sahota's wife and sons are moving to the area from India this spring.



A new dog training and boarding facility is expected to open near Holdrege this summer.

Ben and Nani Pollard of Holdrege purchased 11 acres at 1025 S. Sherman St. south of the Phelps County Fairgrounds for their new business, Southpaw Dog Academy & Boarding. This spring, they will construct a 4,000-square-foot metal building on the property to house kennels for training, overnight dog boarding and doggy daycare. They hope to open in July or August.

Ben and Nani have lived in Holdrege for about 11 years. Ben worked as a paramedic for 16 years at Phelps Memorial Health Center. Nani has been a 911 Dispatcher for 16 years at Buffalo County Sheriff's Office in Kearney.

In their new business, Ben will offer dog obedience training (to help discipline dogs to be well-behaved, listen to their owners, not jump on people or pull on leashes, etc.) and gun-dog training for hunting dogs. They also breed and sell Labrador retrievers.

The new building will have 40 spacious kennels to house dogs overnight. The doggy daycare will allow patrons to drop dogs off during daytime hours Monday-Friday so dogs can play, exercise and socialize while their owners are busy. Southpaw will provide pictures and videos of pets so owners can "peek in" to see their dogs while they are away.



Ben & Nani Pollard (Photo Credit: Langley Photography)

PCDC awarded Southpaw a digital development grant to help with start-up marketing costs. For more information about Southpaw, visit the website at southpawdogacademy.com or call (308) 999-9883.

# Lost Way Brewery Adding Pizza, Outdoor Seating

Patrons of Lost Way Brewery in Holdrege will soon be able to enjoy pizza with their beer.

Brewery co-owner Jessica Kraus said they are hoping to fill a gap in the community by providing another food option. They learned that Billy Jack's pizza was expanding its wholesale pizza sales, and it seemed like a good fit for the brewery. Kraus said the pizza is delicious, and they will work with Billy Jack's to create a signature Lost Way Brewery pizza.

In addition, the brewery will be adding an outdoor seating area this summer. This was made possible by a recent change in the city ordinance that allows businesses to use spaces directly outside their businesses.

The brewerv will also be adding a new seven-gallon fermentation tank to keep up with projected increased sales by adding the pizza

and with increased demand from Lost Way's recent distribution growth.

Kraus said a bill passed in the Nebraska Legislature last year allows breweries to selfdistribute their beer. Lost Way now serves its beer at 11 locations across Nebraska.

"Because of the expanded distribution, we are hoping to see an increase in people coming into our tap room." Kraus said.

PCDC is supporting Lost Way's new fermentation tank and pizza business with the business and franchise grants program.

"This wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for PCDC," Kraus said. "They've always believed in what we are wanting to do for the community and for our business, and having that support has been tremendous. None of this would have happened with PCDC.'

## 

Bertrand

Funk

Holdrege

Loomis

## Former Market Owner **Opens Equine-Assisted** Learning Service in Bertrand

Brenda Johnson of Bertrand has started Prairie Equine Experience, a business that improves the lives of kids and adults through working with horses.

Johnson has previous business experience as owner and operator of the Countryside Market grocery store in Bertrand for more than 12 years. She sold it a few years ago and after some soulsearching decided to open a new business that combines her love of horses and children.

She purchased a miniature horse named JuneBug. She started by visiting schools and nursing homes with the horse to brighten the days of seniors and children. And, now she offers equine-assisted learning that is a type of therapy on an acreage she rents just outside of Bertrand.

Johnson said clients who struggle with anxiety, ADHD, autism, self-confidence or motivation can benefit from horse therapy.

"A horse feels what a person feels," Johnson said. "They can hear a person's heartbeat within 4 feet and can tell if they are anxious or calm."

Johnson has offered a program to help kids who struggle to read. The horse roams the pen while the children read to her. She also offers outdoor group or individual meditations with JuneBua.

Johnson also wrote a children's book called "JuneBug Finds Her Forever Home." The book is bringing more visibility to her business. It Is available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble websites or by contacting Johnson.

For more information, visit Prairie Equine Experience on Facebook.



Brenda Johnson & JuneBug



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Your SOURCE for local business opportunities and economic development news in Phelps County!

#### COUNTY PHELPS BUSINESS JOURNAL



**BASEBALL COMPLEX** 

**ALLMAND UPDATE** 

**BERTRAND PROFILE** 

**NEW PEOPLE IN BIZ** 







THE DALE The Dale Residences will soon open some of its 25 remodeled minimaliststyle apartments and Airbnb rentals. One of the five Airbnb units is pictured here. PCDC assisted the project with GO! DREAM grants.