

# Phelps County Business Journal

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PHELPS COUNTY, NEBRASKA



## Trends In Manufacturing

PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery recently attended the State Chamber's Economic Development Summit, which revealed the following upcoming trends in manufacturing:

### Smaller plants:

Manufacturing plants will become smaller and more diffuse in their locations in the near future. They will require fewer employees, but those employees will need higher skill sets and will receive higher pay.

**Robotics:** More sophisticated equipment, including robotics, will replace older equipment enabling companies to rapidly respond to changes in the marketplace. The technology will allow manufacturers to "reshore" foreign operations and eliminate international transportation costs.

**Data Jobs:** The fastest growing jobs of the future will be in data evaluation. More than 90 percent of the data generated in the history of the planet has occurred within the last two years, and the trend is accelerating.

## PCDC Unveils Incentives To 'Grow Opportunities'

Phelps County will be "growing opportunities" in 2017 with the new GO! programs designed to support small businesses, train a quality workforce, develop workforce housing, continue downtown improvements and partner with developers who want to invest in the area.

"Our intention is to create a dynamic regional economy," said PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery. "We are going places."

PCDC has organized its financial programs in the new GO! plan that includes five main categories: GO! Business, GO! Work, GO! Build, GO! Downtown and GO! Home.

Some of the financial programs, such as high-demand scholarships, have previously existed, but many of the financial assistance programs are new. The funds for most of the programs come from the LB840 sales tax funds approved by voters in the fall of 2015.

"We've designed this to explain to people how we can help and how these programs can be accessed in the local community," Tillery said of the new plan. "These are the tools to get things done."

In this issue of the Phelps County Business Journal, we go into further depth on the GO! Build incentives on page 5. Watch for future issues of the Phelps County Business Journal and subscribe to PCDC's monthly e-newsletter to stay up to date on the latest news and opportunities.



Ron Tillery

## GO! PHELPS COUNTY

# TOOLS FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

### Growing Opportunities

**Logo:** PCDC has created a new branded package of incentive tools. The GO! logo created for the new plan stands for "Growing Opportunities" and symbolizes forward movement.

**GO! BUILD:** See page 5 for details on the GO! BUILD financial programs.



### GO! BUSINESS

Helping small business get started, grow and be sustainable

- Legacy Business Program
- Owner Occupied Assistance Program
- Steps to Start Up
- Next Step Program

### GO! WORK

Preparing our local workforce to meet jobs of the future and to retain local talent

- High Demand Jobs Scholarship
- Employee Improvement Program

### GO! BUILD

Assisting developers to invest and build in Phelps County

- Permitting Assistance and Project Advocacy
- Utility Development Assistance
- Site Preparation Assistance
- Infrastructure Development at Iron Horse Business & Industry Park
- Low Interest Construction Loans

### GO! DOWNTOWN

Aimed at developing a vibrant and aesthetically attractive downtown core

- First Impressions Grant Program
- Downtown Living Program

### GO! HOME

Aimed at consumers, the program helps buyers and renters to secure workforce housing and attracts and retains a resident labor force in Phelps County

- Down Payment Matching Grant Program for New Residents
- Utility Rebate Program for New Construction Residences
- Rent Assistance Rebate Program for New Residents





**Executive Director**  
Ron Tillery

**Project Coordinator**  
Alli Donohue

**Administrative Assistant**  
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Thomas Nutt  
Tim Rehm  
Jim Wiser



502 East Avenue, Suite 201  
PO Box 522  
Holdrege, NE 68949-0522  
ph (308) 995-4148  
fax (308) 995-4158

Website: [www.phelpscountyne.com](http://www.phelpscountyne.com)

#### Newsletter Editor - Kristine Jacobson

Please send news releases,  
news tips and story ideas to  
[krjacobson@q.com](mailto:krjacobson@q.com)  
or call (308) 995-5561

## Governor's Remarks Encourage Outgoing President Diedrichsen

### Doug Stevenson Next PCDC Board President

Fred Diedrichsen will be completing his two-year term as PCDC's board president in early 2017, and Doug Stevenson will be taking over the leadership role.

As Fred reflects on the past two years as president, he has a lot to be proud of.

Fred, a local retired dentist, said one of the most exciting events of his term was Gov. Pete Ricketts' attendance and speech at PCDC's Prosperity Project II kickoff event in October. At the event, the governor praised PCDC and the county for the work it is doing to retain and attract business.

"You are doing exactly the right thing, which is why I am here," the governor said. "We are here to support you."

"His comments were taken as an endorsement for what we are doing for economic development in Phelps County," Fred said. "PCDC now has a firm financial basis and organizational structure that will allow us to expand our plan of work."

He cited several PCDC accomplishments that he is glad to have been a part of:

- Finding and hiring a new executive director and accomplishing a smooth transition,
- The renewal of the LB840 sales tax by 83 percent,
- Naming and the continued development of the Iron Horse Industrial Park,
- Nearing the completion of a successful investor campaign, Prosperity Project II, to fund PCDC operations,

■ Helping foster cooperation and understanding among other entities that are working together for economic development, including the Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce, the Holdrege Housing Authority and the city governments.

Fred said one of the biggest lessons he has learned during his term is that economic development is a team effort, and the process takes time.

"It involves making connections, contacts and building trust with potential players in the process," he said. "Everyone is trying to do the same thing, so we need to be better organized, give ourself a brand and be out in front."

Fred said it's important to recruit PCDC board members who are willing to become actively engaged in working with the staff and county leaders.

After Fred's term as president is complete in February, he will continue to serve on the executive committee and on the board enhancement committee and in whatever other capacity the new president asks him to serve.

Fred said the biggest challenge facing Phelps County (and most small communities in the state) is creating more workforce housing. The challenge of creating a skilled workforce and the continued focus on expanding and retaining current businesses and attracting new business will always be important for PCDC as well.

Doug Stevenson will begin his term as president after PCDC's annual meeting in February.

"Doug comes with a wealth of experience having worked with the city and county as an employee of Olsson Associates and also having served on the city council," Fred said. "He will be a great asset to PCDC in continuing to develop the industrial park. I would encourage him as president to look to the executive director, the staff and board as partners and continue to work together. Your efforts today may not be immediate, but we are working for the continued betterment of Phelps County."



Fred Diedrichsen



Doug Stevenson

## Video Company Opening in Downtown Loomis

### Sweeneys Find Niche In Wedding Videography

Three years ago, Andi Sweeney's brother asked her to film and create a video of his wedding.

That request unleashed a creative side in Andi that has resulted in a booming wedding videography business that will open a storefront location in downtown Loomis this spring.

Andi, a former part-time family and consumer science teacher at Loomis Public Schools, had previously enjoyed creating "slide shows" for her classes. When her brother asked her to video his wedding, she wanted to make it great and researched ways to do that. She came across an innovative wedding video concept that involves a video interview of the couple prior to the wedding.

She used her laptop's camera to interview her brother and his fiancé days before the wedding and showed it at the reception.

"People at the reception were just like blown away," she said. "They thought it was really neat and said it had really great music and they liked the interview."

That video resulted in another wedding video request. She did more research and realized that wedding videographers are few and far between in Nebraska. She decided to invest in some equipment (taking a loan out from her husband) to start filling that demand.

Her business, Infinite Productions Handcrafted Videos, officially kicked off in June 2014. She created a website and was hired for 10 more weddings that year.

Andi's niche is her same-day edits and viewing. She interviews couples ahead of the wedding asking them to share information about their first meeting, first kiss and the engagement. On the wedding day, she films the entire day's preparations and the ceremony. Amazingly, she presents the entire video – including the walk down the aisle and wedding vows – just a few hours later for the entire reception audience to view.



Andi and Andrew Sweeney will open Infinite Productions Handcrafted Videos in downtown Loomis this spring. The thriving videography business started in 2014 and features unique same-day edit wedding video stories.

In 2015 and 2016, Andi was booked for 20 weddings each year, and in 2017, she is already booked for her annual goal of 18 weddings and has had to turn away business.

Although her target audience is couples between Grand Island and Denver, many of the couples who have hired her for the next year are from Lincoln and Omaha. She is excited to host them in Loomis at her new store.

"It will be neat because the people will be driving to Loomis for interviews so they can experience a small town," Andi said.

Andi's husband, Andrew, is a farmer and has been an instrumental business partner helping her with business, marketing and technical advice and being the "muscle" of the business, carrying equipment and accompanying her at each wedding.

Andi's business has expanded beyond weddings as she has filled requests for several harvest videos for local farmers and is now being asked to film commercials and videos for

nonprofits and area businesses.

Because of that growth, the Sweeneys decided a storefront was needed. After looking at several building options in area towns, they decided on their own town of Loomis.

"Ultimately, we wanted it to be in Loomis," Andi said. "Our kids go to school there."

They found exactly the building they were looking for in downtown Loomis, a historic space located just down the street from another successful wedding business, The Bridal Isle. The Sweeneys purchased the front half of the building at 303 Commercial and started renovations. They are hoping to open at the new location in late February or early March.

Her future goals involve filming destination weddings and continuing to capture memories for couples for years to come.

For more information about Infinite Productions, visit [www.infiniteproductions.net](http://www.infiniteproductions.net) or follow them at [facebook.com/infiniteproductionsfilms](https://facebook.com/infiniteproductionsfilms).



## BD Begins 3-Year, \$100 Million Expansion Project

BD, Phelps County's largest employer, announced in September its plan to invest \$100 million into the Holdrege plant to expand production capacity for its insulin syringe.

Local BD Plant Manager Chuck Mix said work has already begun on the expansion and will continue for about three years.

"This is a vote of confidence in Holdrege and in the workforce here; guaranteeing BD's presence here far into the future, which we are very excited about," Mix said.

In the next six months, Mix said that new fascia will be installed on the building's exterior, and there will be a new front breakroom area and a new cafeteria in the back of the



Chuck Mix

380,000-square-foot facility.

A combination of both local and out-of-town contractors will be working on the BD project over the next few years.

Most of the investment is going toward replacing older manufacturing lines with new equipment, which will help the plant increase its output of syringes by about 20 percent. BD already produces more than 2 billion insulin syringes each year, which averages to be more than 250,000 syringes per hour.

Mix said that the new machinery lines will require higher skills sets, which will mean training opportunities for current employees and more hiring at the local plant.

BD celebrated its 50th anniversary in Holdrege in October 2016. The plant began operations in Holdrege in 1966 in a 12,000-square-foot building with 66 associates. Today, the facility employs more than 650 associates and manufactures 20 different BD products.

### BD Offers \$16,000 Scholarship

A new \$16,000 scholarship will help area high school graduates interested in future careers at BD.

BD established the scholarship to encourage future employees. The recipient will be a student planning to study in one of the following areas: electronics programming, electro-mechanical technology, tool and die or molding processes.

Any graduating senior of a Phelps County high school or any high school adjoining Phelps County is eligible. The successful recipient must commit to working at least two years at BD following graduation.

The scholarship is available through the Phelps County Community Foundation, and applications are due by Feb. 15. For more information about the scholarship and its criteria, visit [www.phelpsfoundation.org](http://www.phelpsfoundation.org).

## Tours, Scholarships Encourage Local Students to Return Home

Part of PCDC's strategy to create a trained and quality workforce for area employers starts right here at home.

"Statistically, many students ultimately chose to move back to raise a family with the same quality of life they enjoy now," said PCDC Project Coordinator Alli Donohue. "With this in mind, we want to make sure they know the amazing opportunities available to them."

In December, PCDC's Alli Donohue organized a presentation for juniors at Holdrege High School after they toured Allmand Bros., BD and Phelps Memorial Health Center. The tour was arranged by Holdrege Public Schools, and PCDC used the opportunity to share information about high-demand jobs in Phelps County.

PCDC arranged a panel of local residents that included a registered nurse, the human resources director at Allmand Bros. and an employee of Hawkins Manufacturing. The speakers encouraged the students to evaluate life goals and the cost of education when considering a career. They emphasized the advantages of life and careers in Phelps County, such as low



PCDC organizes a tour of area employers for Loomis and Bertrand students to encourage them to consider local careers.

unemployment, safety and job security.

Donohue will arrange a similar tour for Loomis and Bertrand students in February so they can learn about local career options as well.

PCDC also participates in the South-Central Nebraska Career Fair to further encourage local careers.

### High-Demand Jobs Scholarship Applications Due February 15

Scholarships are again being offered in 2017 to encourage students to return home after their education to work in high-demand jobs. The scholarships are intended for both high school and non-traditional students.

PCDC and the local Phelps County Community Foundation have both pledged funds to continue the scholarship program for another three years, giving more local students the opportunity to earn funds for college and helping local employers find workers to fill high-demand jobs.

High-demand jobs in Phelps County are in nursing, agri-business and technology, diesel mechanics, engineering technology, mechatronics engineering, injection mold technology, electro-mechanical technology, tool and die making, construction trades and welding.

The scholarship recipients must promise to return to Phelps County to work after graduation.

Applications are due Feb. 15 and are available at [www.phelpsfoundation.org](http://www.phelpsfoundation.org).

## Trade Shows, Partnerships Plant Seeds For Growth

Connections and relationships are vital to economic development.

That's why PCDC places an emphasis on attending trade shows and continuing partnerships with key influencers.

PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery recently attended the FABTECH conference in Las Vegas to make connections in the metal fabricating and welding industries.

"Trade shows feature a high concentration of people within a particular industry segment," Tillery said. "For the most part, it's a more efficient way of targeting and talking to businesses that may have an interest in expansion or relocation. Trade shows also present an opportunity to meet with site selection professionals and industry experts."

Tillery said in 2017, PCDC plans to target the food processing industry and may attend the International Food Processing Conference (IFPC) in early February in Atlanta, Ga. It is one of the largest and most important food processing shows.

Tillery is also planning a trip to Chicago in April to attend another trade show and to schedule meetings with site selection consultants as Chicago is home to many of the largest and most active site selectors.

Besides attending trade shows and visiting



PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery, left, attended the FABTECH conference in Las Vegas in November to connect with leaders in the metal and fabricating businesses.

with site selectors, PCDC continues to foster its partnerships with companies such as Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District and Black Hills Energy.

"Both are longtime and essential partners in economic development," Tillery said. "Utilities often have business development departments, but in the case of NPPD and Black Hills, their support is unparalleled."

Tillery said each company has employees strategically located throughout their service territories making it easier for organizations like PCDC to cooperate with them on specific

projects or develop valuable resource materials.

NPPD recently prepared a Target Industry Study for PCDC that provides invaluable information regarding Phelps County's labor supply, commuting patterns and the business segments best suited for the area. Black Hills sponsored a booth and a regional delegation at the FABTECH trade show that enabled PCDC to expand its lead generation.

"The ease at which we work together is appreciated," Tillery said. "They're responsive and have intelligence or research resources to support our work."

## GO! BUILD Tool Provides New Financial Incentives

PCDC has designed a new box of tools to encourage business and industrial expansion in Phelps County.

The toolbox contains incentives such as low or zero-interest loans, deferred lot payments, project advocacy and assistance with permits, site preparation, utility development and infrastructure.

"We want to use these tools to be partners in economic development in the county," said PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery. "We are open for business, and we have the tools to help."

The new incentives are part of the GO! BUILD financial assistance program that kicks

### Stay Connected

To learn more about the Washington School property project and other PCDC news, sign up for our monthly GO! E-newsletter at [www.phelpscountyne.com/phelps/news](http://www.phelpscountyne.com/phelps/news).

off in 2017 as part of the larger GO (Growing Opportunities) plan.

Tillery explained that the GO! BUILD financial incentives can be used for local and/or outside businesses.

"We will be their advocate to the city and the

county," Tillery said.

For outside developers, it can be a hassle to track down the correct local resources and information if they don't know anyone. PCDC can help developers with that process.

As an example, PCDC has been working with the City of Holdrege to purchase the former Washington School property to work with a developer on a housing and retail project.

PCDC, as the owner of the property, can provide incentives and assistance.

For more information about financial programs, contact Ron Tillery at PCDC at (308) 995-4148 or [ron@phelpcountyne.com](mailto:ron@phelpcountyne.com).



## PMHC Named Blue Distinction Center

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska has selected Phelps Memorial Health Center as a Blue Distinction Center for Knee and Hip Replacement, part of the Blue Distinction Specialty Care program. Blue Distinction Centers are nationally designated healthcare facilities shown to deliver improved patient safety and better health outcomes, based on objective measures that were developed by Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies with input from the medical community.

Knee and hip replacement procedures are among the fastest growing medical treatments in the United States, according to studies published in the June 2014 Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Hospitals designated as Blue Distinction Centers for Knee and Hip Replacement demonstrate expertise in total knee and total hip replacement surgeries, resulting in fewer patient complications and hospital readmissions. Designated hospitals must also maintain national accreditation.

PMHC Chief Executive Officer Mark Harrel gave credit to his team in receiving this outstanding designation.

"Team Phelps is passionate about delivering high quality healthcare, right here in our community," Harrel said. "Our families, neighbors and friends know they can count on us to fulfill their healthcare needs without leaving town. Receiving the Blue Cross Distinction Specialty Care solidifies the hard work and dedication every member of our team has put forth."

## Casey's North Completes Remodel

The north Casey's location in Holdrege completed a store remodel in November, which included adding a sub-sandwich station and walk-in beer cooler. New bathrooms, cabinets and flooring were installed along with a new slushy station and expanded coffee bar.

"It's an overall fresh look to the store all around," Store Manager Jeanette Ashcraft said.

Casey's, located at 1206 Burlington, already offered pizza delivery and can now offer sub sandwich delivery as well.

Because of the added services, Ashcraft hired two additional employees pushing the total number of Casey's employees to 19 full-time staff. Casey's is open 5 a.m.-midnight.

## New Owner Plans Restoration of Historic Bank Building

Joe Melton has purchased the "Bank" building at 401 West Ave. and plans to restore the building to its original appearance.

Melton said he plans to tuckpoint the exterior sandstone façade, replace 18 windows and do trim work on the interior.

A 1,000 foot rental space is available on the main level as previous renter, Holdrege Computer Technology Center, is relocating. The Salon Experience continues to rent a portion of the building.

Melton said the open rental space would be perfect for a restaurant or other food or beverage business.

The building was one of the first buildings in downtown Holdrege. An old opera house surrounds the bank building but is not included in Melton's purchase.



## Subway Adding Drive-Thru

Holdrege residents will soon have another drive-through food option.

Subway, 322 4th Ave., is adding a drive-through lane and paving the back lot and part of the alley near its parking lot.

Matthew Luebbe, owner/manager of the local restaurant, said construction has already begun and should be completed by February, depending on the weather.

"People are always on the go," Luebbe said. "This will help them out a bit more."

The drive-through will feature the latest in drive-through technology as customers will be able to order from a touch-screen menu similar to the ordering process with Subway's smartphone app.

Luebbe said the entire project will be completed through the work of local contractors, including Edgren Construction, Trent's Electric, Popple Construction, Grotthuis Plumbing and Alpha Heating & Air.

Luebbe said another five or six employees will be added to his current team employees once the drive-through is complete, boosting the restaurant's total staff to around 20.

## Rustic Nebraska Opening Downtown

Local entrepreneur Joe Melton will be opening a retail store in downtown Holdrege for Rustic Nebraska, his custom furniture business.

Melton purchased the building at 224 West Ave. and is in the final stages of remodeling. He is hoping to open in February.

Rustic Nebraska was started after Melton shared a photo on social media of rustic barnwood furniture he had created. He now sells custom furniture, such as dining tables, headboards, bars, end tables, shelves, cribs and more, across the Midwest. Rustic Nebraska created the front counter for Stephanie's in downtown Holdrege.

While Melton has sold Rustic Nebraska furniture in Grand Island and Kearney malls, he's excited to have a retail store in Holdrege.

"We just feel like, let's keep it home," he said.

The store will employ three people and will also include custom framing services for photographs, posters and artwork.

For more information and to see some of the furniture created by Rustic Nebraska visit, <http://rusticnebraska.webs.com> or follow the store on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/rusticnebraskadecor/](http://www.facebook.com/rusticnebraskadecor/)

## Malleck Leads HR at Allmand Bros.

Andrea Malleck began work as the Human Resources Manager at Allmand Bros. in June 2016.

Andrea, who is originally from McCook, attended the University of Colorado at Boulder and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and neuroscience.

She and her husband, Brandon, moved to the area two years ago when Brandon accepted a job at Black Hills Energy.

Andrea worked as a school counselor at Elwood Public Schools for the past two years. She is enjoying using her counseling and psychology skills to recruit and encourage employees at Allmand Bros.

Malleck was the Teammates coordinator in Elwood, and she and Brandon recently became Teammates mentors in Holdrege. They also enjoy exercising and traveling.

## Johnson Named HIM Leader

Jennifer Johnson is the new Health Information Management Leader at Phelps Memorial Health Center. She replaces Linda Reiser, who will continue at PMHC as a coder.

Johnson has worked at PMHC for five years, beginning her career as a Quality Analyst. She moved to HIM in 2014 and was promoted to Assistant HIM Leader about a year ago.

Johnson earned her associates degree in HIM and graduated summa cum laude in 2005 from the College of Saint Mary and is

certified as a Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT).

"I love the healthcare environment," Johnson said. "It's a fast-paced, ever-changing, non-stop learning environment. I want to be a part of healthcare, and this hospital in particular, to be involved in all the upcoming changes."

Jennifer moved from Omaha to central Nebraska 10 years ago. She is married to Jim, and they have two children, Logan, 14, and Dillon, 9.

## Swearingen Joins PMHC

Phelps Memorial Health Center welcomes Crystal Swearingen as Guest Services Leader.

She will lead the day-to-day operations of the Food and Nutrition and Environmental Services departments.

Swearingen worked at Pizza Hut for 21 years serving as general manager of the restaurant for the past 13 years.

A native of Holdrege, Swearingen lives with her daughters, age 16 and 11. One of their favorite hobbies is baking, and they are looking forward to getting to do more of that together.

## Hudson Leads PMHC Financial Services

Kami Hudson has joined Phelps Memorial Health Center as the Patient Financial Services (PFS) Leader. She replaces Vivian Beaudette, who has joined the Fiscal Services team as a Revenue Cycle Analyst.

The PFS Leader oversees facility operations of patient financial services including scheduling, pre-registration, pre-authorization, admission, billing/collections, and financial counseling.

Along with a passion for patient care, Kami stated that her love for the S.E.R.V.E. values (Service, Excellence, Respect, Value and Enthusiasm) was a primary reason for her interest in Phelps

Memorial Health Center, stating she was excited to see enthusiasm as a core value of the facility. "I want to provide a place where people want to come to work in a laid back, fun and professional atmosphere."

Hudson, a Gothenburg native, has lived in Holdrege with her husband, Brent, and daughters Karley and Claire for 4½ years. She received her bachelor's degree in Speech Organizational Communications from UNK. She was most recently employed in the Managed Medicaid Insurance realm, working as a liaison between the providers and insurance planning covering one-third of Nebraska.

## Law Office Welcomes New Attorney

A third attorney has joined the Law Offices of Tana Fye in downtown Holdrege.

Sagan Carman-Downer, an Imperial native, began work in August for the firm, joining Tana Fye and Jordan Mruz.



Carman-Downer graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with a degree in business administration and then from the University of Nebraska College of Law.

She can help clients with estate planning, real estate work, probate, family law and other general legal work.

Her husband, Todd, is a farmer in Red Willow County, and they live in Bartley.

## Great Western Hires Jacques Smith

Jacques Smith III is the new Market President at Great Western Bank. He will lead the team in agricultural and commercial banking and growing the bank's brand in the community.

Smith has worked in commercial banking and

wealth management for more than 17 years. He is a native of Lexington and earned a bachelor's degree in business with an emphasis in real estate from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He most recently worked with Bank of the West in Kansas City and

Omaha, managing the Middle Market Regional Business Banking group.

He retired in early 2016 from serving 21 years in the Nebraska Army National Guard, including deployments to Iraq in 2005 and 2006 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

He lives in Kearney with his three children, Cody, 18; Laikyn, 15; and Olivia, 14. He enjoys spending time with them and attending their activities.

PO Box 522  
Holdrege, NE 68949-0522

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economic development news in Phelps County!



# *Phelps County* Business Journal

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## SAVE THE DATE!

### PCDC ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, February 9

6:30 p.m. Social | 7 p.m. Program & Meal

**FEATURED SPEAKER:** Tom Osborne, former Nebraska  
football coach and founder of Teammates.

**HONORED:** Business of the Year

**LOCATION:** Taste of Texas, 304 East Avenue, Holdrege

The public is invited to attend.

Tickets are \$30. RSVP to [spafford@phelpscountyne.com](mailto:spafford@phelpscountyne.com) or 308.995.4148.



Osborne will spend  
a portion of his time  
in Holdrege at a  
Teammates building  
event with Holdrege  
Public Schools.