

Phelps County Business Journal

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PHELPS COUNTY, NEBRASKA



Phelps County Shopping Statistics

An initial report from Buxton Co. revealed retail leakage (residents are spending more for products than local businesses capture) in Phelps County. Leakage may suggest there is unmet demand in the trade area. The following categories showed potential opportunity due to retail leakage:

- Furniture and Home Furnishing Stores
- Electronics and Appliances Stores
- Clothing and Clothing Accessories
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Books & Music
- General Merchandise Stores
- Restaurants, Bars

Phelps County is attracting outside sales in the following categories:

- Automotive Parts and Auto Dealers
- Building Materials and Garden Supplies
- Health and Personal Care
- Food and Beverage Stores

BOOSTING LOCAL SALES

New Service Helps Retailers Grow

Data & Marketing Tools Included In Buxton Co. Contract

A new service will be available to Phelps County retail businesses in 2018 that will help business owners identify opportunities to grow their businesses.

The Phelps County Development Corporation has signed a contract with Buxton Co., a nationwide statistics and marketing firm, to provide current business owners and future entrepreneurs with the data they need to be successful.

"We see significant opportunity in Phelps County for retail growth and development," PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said. "We think it is extremely important that we are more proactive and intentional in our efforts to spark growth."

That's why PCDC is contracting with Buxton and making its services available to all retailers in the county.

Parker Key, regional director of sales for Buxton Co., said the biggest value to Phelps County with this service will be to improve the quality of life for residents and to generate tax revenue to continue to improve the community.

Key said Buxton will conduct a thorough market analysis of the area to identify the best opportunities for existing retailers or the best potential new retailers to bring into the market. The report will indicate what customers are buying in the community and what they are buying at retailers outside the



PCDC has contracted with Buxton Co., a statistics and marketing firm, to help local retailers identify new opportunities for growth.

community.

This type of data can help an entrepreneur who is considering opening a new business or expanding a product line make a decision based on actual statistics rather than guessing or word-of-mouth comments.

As an example, Buxton said a community may have a thriving hardware store. But, a statistical analysis may reveal that there is leakage (or customers are leaving the community to make purchases elsewhere) in electronics. The hardware store may then decide to start selling televisions and other electronics to keep that money local.

In addition to identifying new sales potential, Buxton also provides businesses with marketing tools to reach those customers. In the hardware store example, Buxton would be able to provide the store with mailing lists of potential new customers and help the owner create an e-mail,

social media or direct mail campaign to announce the new line of products and attract those customers to the store.

In addition to helping existing businesses or local entrepreneurs, the company's market analysis will help identify best-fit new retail targets. Buxton then would provide PCDC with contact information and a strategy for recruiting those new retailers.

"We help to empower local leaders, entrepreneurs and business leaders to make evidence-based decisions based on analytical findings," Key said.

Tillery said the follow-up strategies offered by Buxton was one of the reasons PCDC chose to contract with them. The company will help with presentations and education instead of just providing statistics.

Through PCDC's contract, Buxton statistics and services will be made available to all retail businesses in Phelps County starting in 2018.



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Anderson Remembered As Promoter of Rural Nebraska

PCDC lost a long-time board member, enthusiastic promoter of Phelps County economic development and a genuine and honest friend when Tim Anderson died on Oct. 12 at age 68.

Anderson was a current PCDC Board of Directors member and had served on the board since March of 2008. But, promoting Phelps County and rural economic development was a passion of his for much longer.

He followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, William (Bill) Anderson and his father, Willard "Bud" Anderson, who also both worked on industry recruitment and business promotion in Holdrege as volunteers in economic development. They were part of the successful recruitment of BD to Holdrege in 1963.

Anderson's work in local economic development spanned more than 30 years counting the time he previously served on the HIDE (Holdrege Industrial Development Council) and the HERO (Holdrege Economic Resource Organization).

He was instrumental in encouraging Phelps County to start using LB840 sales-tax funds to spur economic development. And during Anderson's recent tenure as president of the PCDC board, he helped finalize the purchase of the Iron Horse Business & Industry Park. That is a legacy he leaves that will continue to bear fruit far into the future.

Fellow PCDC board member Tim Rehm said he will miss Anderson's relationship skills and his ability to connect with people.

"I think his world was all about relationships," Rehm said of Anderson. "He cared a lot about Holdrege, Phelps County and South-Central Nebraska. He was always ready to help make it grow."

His welcoming attitude was refreshing to Rehm.

"Even though Tim's roots ran deep in Phelps County, he didn't care that I wasn't born and bred here," Rehm said. "All he cared about was what I brought when I came."

Rehm and Kearney Hub editorial writers recognized Anderson's ability to peaceably



Tim Anderson

resolve conflict in difficult situations.

The Hub editorial written a few days after Anderson's death described him as a "master of open government."

"As CNPPID's longtime director of communications and public relations, Anderson sought ways to depressurize the contentious issues involving the hundreds of cabin owners who leased their lots around the lake from CNPPID," the Hub editorial stated. "He worked hard to keep people informed, and when lake issues came up at meetings, he encouraged the people affected by the decisions to attend and participate."

"We're certain his many efforts for the betterment of our region, and his positive effects will be evident well into the future."

PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said Anderson will be missed locally as well as across Nebraska.

"He had genuine friendships throughout the entire state," Tillery said. "Sometimes you don't know what somebody is delivering on your behalf until they are not there to do it any longer. And, I think that's going to be the case with Tim."

Tillery said the PCDC board of directors will appoint a new member to fill Tim's position at its January meeting.

PCDC Opens Doors to Dairy Industry

Phelps County Among 12 Nebraska Communities Represented at Dairy Expo

The cow population could look a little different in Phelps County in a few years thanks to recent efforts by PCDC to recruit a dairy processor or dairy producers to the area.

PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery recently attended the World Dairy Expo in Wisconsin as part of a statewide delegation to promote growing the dairy industry in Nebraska.

Prior to the dairy expo, PCDC launched a national social media publicity campaign that garnered attention across the country. Industry officials visited Tillery at the expo and had already heard that Phelps County was interested in welcoming dairy processors and producers.

"We just had terrific word-of-mouth as a result of that campaign," Tillery said.

Tillery's work at the expo and the pre-expo publicity developed leads that could result in a few more spotted cows among the black and brown ones that currently dominate Phelps County.

"It was a tremendous experience," Tillery said of the expo trip. "The show included manufacturers of dairy related-equipment, dairy processors and of course, dairy producers, all in one place. We were able to have high-quality conversations with processors, manufacturers



PCDC joined a statewide effort this fall to recruit the dairy industry to Nebraska. That work could lead to more spotted cows in Phelps County in the future.

and producers and, maybe most importantly, with a site-selection consultant for the dairy industry."

At the expo, Tillery connected with a representative from a company that works with dairy processors to find new locations for cheese, ice cream or other dairy-related plants.

Tillery attended the conference along with a team from Nebraska that included representatives from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Public Power District, the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska State Dairy Association, and the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in

Nebraska (A-FAN). One other community, Grand Island, also sent a representative.

Phelps County was chosen to be one of 12 communities that were promoted at the expo.

"The Grow Nebraska Dairy team had identified 12 different communities in the state that in their judgment were well prepared and would support both processing and dairy producers, and Holdrege was one of those," Tillery said. "We do have conditions here that are ideally suited for livestock production."

A follow-up presentation was made for a dairy that was interested in possibly relocating to the area, and PCDC will continue to follow up with contacts made in the dairy industry.

Iron Horse Update

Local officials continue to work behind the scenes to prepare the county's 134-acre Iron Horse Business & Industry Park for development.

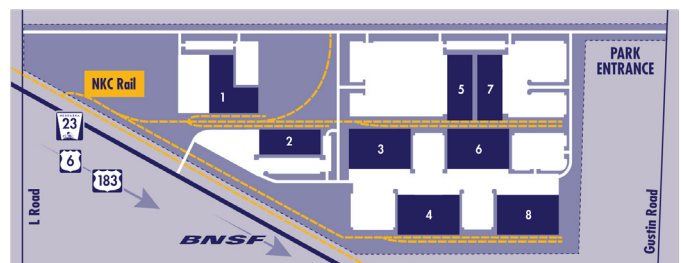
The city recently approved sewer and water districts for the industrial park, and it is expected that sewer and water infrastructure will be constructed on the property in 2018.

"This puts us closer to being a viable industrial park," PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said. "Right now, it's just a cornfield. Without water, sewer and roads, we are limited in our ability to market the property."

Tillery said the goal for 2018 is to make significant steps in making the property shovel ready for potential businesses.

PCDC is planning to construct an official entrance on the south side of

IRON HORSE BUSINESS & INDUSTRY PARK



the industrial park leading off of Gustin Road in 2018.

PCDC will continue to push for Gustin Road to be paved to further boost the industrial park's marketability and competitiveness.



BD Completes First Year of Expansion Project



In early 2017, BD began construction on a three-year \$100 million expansion project at its Holdrege plant. After one year, some of the work is coming to a completion. The Holdrege manufacturer of syringes and other diabetes equipment has a new modern look with great new amenities to enhance the work experience for its 650 employees.

Most noticeable to the public is the new modern exterior on the nearly 400,000-square-foot facility. At night, the lights on the northeast side of the building appear to make the shape of a syringe.

A small addition of about 2,000 square feet was added to the front office area to make room for new restrooms, a modern break room complete with snacks and drinks that can be purchased by the touch of a finger and large refrigerators to store lunches and snacks, and a new nurse's office and treatment area.

BD Plant Manager Chuck Mix said the plant recently hired an occupational nurse, Sam Auld, who will be available to treat minor employee health issues and will work on proactive health and safety initiatives.

In the back of the plant, a modern cafeteria and break room was added to give employees a comfortable place to relax during their breaks. It is three times larger than the old cafeteria/break room. The new modern kitchen will contract with kitchen staff to provide meals for employees to purchase. Employees can relax in the break room's lounge area on couches surrounded by large windows that overlook a cornfield on the southwest side of the plant. A mix of high-top tables, booths and regular tables and chairs also provide employees opportunities to take a break, enjoy a meal or snack and visit with other employees.

In the main work areas of the plant, Mix said they are in the process of updating all of the manufacturing equipment.

"We're moving every piece of equipment in the plant over a five-year span," Mix said. "It's either getting replaced or updated."

Besides the equipment, the updates also include new brighter lighting, new floors, and updated intercom systems.

"I think everyone appreciates the updates because it ensures our future here," Mix said of the overall project. And with the new equipment, current employees have the opportunity to learn new skills and earn higher pay.



TOP PHOTOS: The new break room in the front office area features a trendy, modern design, lots of seating options and a place to purchase snacks. **EXTERIOR PHOTO:** The \$100 million project at BD in Holdrege included exterior renovations to modernize the plant's look. **BOTTOM PHOTO:** In December, contractors were just finishing up construction on the new break room and cafeteria on the southeast side of the plant.

New Housing Programs Making An Impact

In just six months, three new PCDC housing programs designed to create affordable housing options for working families and turn commuters into full-time residents are already making an impact in Phelps County.

Matching Down Payment Assistance

PCDC is encouraging local employers to provide down payment assistance that is matched by PCDC up to \$2,500. That results in up to \$5,000 in down payment assistance for commuters to purchase a Phelps County home. PCDC's goal was to help 12 commuters become residents in the first year of the program. They are nearly half-way to the goal in the first few months.

Since August, five employees have become Phelps County residents thanks to the program. Three of those employees work at BD, one at Phelps Memorial Health Center and one at Woods & Durham. Four of the homes purchased are in Holdrege, and one is in rural Wilcox. The prices of homes purchased ranged from \$65,000 to \$150,000.

Phoenix Program

This program targets neighborhoods that are in despair by encouraging the renovation of dilapidated, vacant, abandoned and overgrown



PCDC purchased two homes at 11th and Logan Streets in December with plans to demolish them to make space for new workforce housing.

properties. PCDC will purchase properties and then seek bids for demolition work and site preparation work. Properties will then be conveyed to developers at a nominal cost or as a forgivable loan. The developer then constructs homes on the lots and sells properties.

In November, PCDC purchased a property at 304 Keopple in Bertrand to demolish and create an empty lot. In December, PCDC purchased two homes on the corner of 11th and Logan Streets in Holdrege with plans to demolish them and make way for new construction. Two other Holdrege properties and three in Loomis are

also being considered for demolition.

The target price for the new properties constructed on the empty lots is between \$125,000 and \$175,000 per unit.

Sales Tax Holiday

This program encourages contractors or developers to create new workforce housing by returning a portion of sales taxes paid on materials to renovate or build homes. The program applies to all living units, including new construction or major renovations to existing dilapidated homes and rental units.

Briggs & Stratton Grants \$5,000 to Upgrade HHS Technology

A donation from the Briggs & Stratton Foundation will help students at Holdrege High School gain valuable career skills.

The foundation has awarded a \$5,000 grant to HHS to upgrade welding, robotics and CAD equipment and supplies

"Through these efforts, we reinforce the importance of educating and exposing our local youth to skilled trades that are integral both within the community and in our business," said Jim Kaplinski, Operations Manager at Allmand Inc.

Allmand Bros. was purchased by the Briggs & Stratton Co. in 2014 and is now officially operating under the name, Allmand Inc.

"Briggs & Stratton is more committed than ever to making a difference in communities where they operate," Kaplinski said. "Our involvement in the community has been an integral part of our history."

Holdrege High School Industrial Technology



From left, Jim Kaplinski (Allmand), Jeremy Ham (HHS) and Ron Tillery (PCDC).

Teacher Jeremy Ham said the donation will fund the new required operation system for robotics. In the CAD classes, the donation will fund larger computer monitors, new keyboards and upgrades to allow students to work on projects at home.

"This donation helps HHS students by enabling them to interact with the latest technology

associated with CAD and robotics," Ham said. "The technology in these two areas changes rather quickly and is expensive to keep current."

The business community has been supportive of HHS needs in the past as well. Ham said South Central Diesel has given donations to the Industrial Technology department for tool and equipment upgrades, and BD has provided funding for the drafting and bridge building contests.

"These donations are greatly appreciated and help us to provide quality education and experiences for our students," Ham said.

Phelps County Development Corporation Executive Director Ron Tillery said the Briggs & Stratton donation came just two weeks after he arranged for Kaplinski to meet with school officials and take a tour of the high school.

"Our role is to simply introduce people and bring the parties together," Tillery said.

Bruce Furniture Expands

Bruce Furniture has expanded its flooring department in Holdrege and has announced a new location in North Platte.

Holdrege Store Manager Mike Vaughn said a high demand for residential and commercial flooring prompted the decision to lease the empty building next door (formerly Frontier Medical) to expand local product selection. A small renovation project to create a door between the two buildings took place this fall, and the new flooring area is now open. Previously, Bruce Furniture's flooring showroom was packed into about 400 square feet of space. The new showroom allows for 1,800 square feet of showroom space.

Vaughn said the expansion has allowed the store to add two new lines of carpeting and two new lines of hard-floor covering.

The store also recently remodeled the mattress area and became a Mattress First Sleep Center.

Owner Michael Bruce also said that Bruce Furniture added a fifth location in North Platte on Jan. 1. Bruce Furniture purchased Erickson Furniture and Flooring in North Platte and officially opened as Bruce Furniture in early January. Besides Holdrege and North Platte, Bruce Furniture also has locations in Kearney, Hastings and Alliance.

Emken Bookkeeping Has New Location

Ann Mercer has moved her accounting and bookkeeping business to downtown Holdrege.

Emken Bookkeeping & Tax Service is now open at its new location at 511 West Ave., the former site of Bob & Norm's Quality Floors.

Ann said her business has more than 650 clients and had outgrown its former location at 417 Burlington. The new location gives her 3,200 square feet to expand.

"I also think it's going to be a good move to improve visibility," Ann said.

She and her husband are also hoping to show and sell some of their antique collection at the new location.

Mercer purchased Emken Bookkeeping in 2015. She also has a location in Lexington. Between the two locations, she employs two other full-time staff and adds at least five more seasonal staff during tax season.

Besides tax preparation and planning, Ann's business offers bookkeeping, payroll, sales tax and bill pay services to individuals, farmers and businesses.

Lost Way Brewery Opens in Downtown Holdrege

The Lost Way Brewery officially opened its doors to the public in mid-November in downtown Holdrege.

The owners, Jason and Kimberly Hines and Mark and Jessica Kraus, purchased the building at 617 Third Ave. in early 2017. They renovated the building, which was the site of the Sunglow Dairy, and awaited for approval of all federal and state before opening their doors in November.

The owners said they are grateful for the support of local customers in their new business venture. PCDC assisted in the brewery project by awarding the owners a building improvement loan through the GO! Business Program.



New Photography Studio Opens

Mystic Images Photography recently moved its photography studio from Loomis to downtown Holdrege.

Mysti Killough, who is originally from Cambridge, purchased the former antiques building at 816 4th Ave. in June 2016 and recently upgraded the exterior and expanded her hours. She has worked as a photographer since 2010.



Mysti Killough

Mysti lives on a farm north of Holdrege with her husband and two young children. When she is not working, she enjoys life on the farm and raising cattle.

Her photography business includes capturing photographs of weddings, families, newborns, seniors, pets, landscapes and still life.

But her work doesn't end after the photos are taken. She also offers photography framing and will offer design tips on how to arrange photos in the home. She is a member of the Professional Photographers of Nebraska.

Mystic Images is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. She can also be reached at 995-0538 or on Facebook at Mystic Images or through the website at mystic-images.com.

Chamber Hires Kuck as Director

Jawna Kuck has been hired as the new Executive Director of the Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce. She began work Nov. 1, 2017.



Jawna Kuck

Jawna previously worked for the Lexington Community Foundation and at the Wes Lubberstedt law firm in Lexington.

Jawna is originally from Elwood and has lived in Bertrand for the past 15 years.

She has two sons, Wilson, a freshman; and Clayton, a sixth grader.

When she is not working, she enjoys watching her sons' sporting events, spending time with family or playing volleyball.

AgWest Announces New Enterprise

AgWest Commodities has announced plans to work with farmers and landowners looking to buy or sell ground with its new AgWest Land Brokers LLC enterprise.

Jeff Moon of Holdrege will lead the new venture. He has seven years experience in the land brokering business and will help grow a network of AgWest Land Broker agents across the AgWest Commodities trade area. He can be contacted at (308) 627-2630.



Aubri and Dustin Nantkes

Screen Machine Has New Owners

Holdrege natives Aubri and Dustin Nantkes have purchased The Screen Machine to carry on the business that was started by Ray Ruybalid, who passed away unexpectedly in November.

Aubri said she has always enjoyed art and is appreciative of the opportunity to carry on Ray's successful screen-printing business that he had owned and operated since 1998. Aubri previously worked at Gifts & Things, Stephanie's and Sandy's Jewelry in Holdrege.

They are planning to continue to operate the business at its current location at 1515 East Hwy. 6, where they will design and then screen print those designs on a variety products, including t-shirts and sweatshirts, hats, coats, bags, uniforms and jerseys.

More information about The Screen Machine can be found on the new Facebook page at Screen Machine or by calling the business at 995-2265.

Law Office Moves to New Location

A local law firm has a new location for the new year. Dier, Osborn & Cox, P.C., L.L.O. moved in late December from its previous 21-year location at 815 Fourth Ave. to 419 East Ave, which is the former site of Woods & Durham.

Attorney Jeff Cox said he and his staff weren't looking for a new location, but when the Woods & Durham office became available they decided to consider a change. The close proximity to the Phelps County Courthouse will be a plus for Jeff and his fellow attorney, Rod Osborn, and their staff that includes two other full-time staff members and a seasonal part-time employee.

A few renovations are planned for the new location, including painting and a new awning and sign on the exterior and some remodeling inside to create a large conference room and update paint and cabinetry.

Their Fourth Avenue building is now for sale. To inquire about purchasing the building, contact Cox at 995-8621.

Allmand Inc. Announces New Shift

Allmand Brothers, Inc., a subsidiary of Briggs & Stratton Corporation, announced the upcoming addition of a second shift to its manufacturing operations to support continued growth in the rental market.

Allmand attributes an increased demand for the portable equipment it produces to growth in the construction and special events industries.

First Impression Grants

Many businesses across Phelps County will be looking good in the new year thanks to PCDC's First Impression Grants.

The \$1,000 grants will continue in 2018. Businesses are reminded to get their applications in early as grants will be awarded on a first-come first-served basis.

For more information about the grants or to apply, please call Carley at PCDC at (308) 995-4148 or download and application on the website at www.phelpscountyne.com.

Adding another shift enables the company to meet demand with the quality, durability and reliability the industry has come to expect from Allmand products.

"The growth we're seeing in customer demand, coupled with Briggs & Stratton's increased strategic focus on the rental channel, has brought us to the fortunate position of needing to add employees to our team – and we see that growth continuing," said James Kaplinski, manager of operations at Allmand. "It's an exciting time to work at Allmand."

To view available positions and apply online, visit www.allmand.com/aboutus/employment.

New Wiggles & Giggles Academy Planning Early 2018 Opening

A new child-care center with extended hours will open in Holdrege in early 2018.

Jamie Johnson and Andrae Matthews have formed a partnership to open Wiggles & Giggles Academy, which will serve newborns and children up to age 5 at its location at 2321 East 4th Ave.

CEO Jamie Johnson previously provided in-home child care services and most recently worked at the YMCA at R7 Child Care that closed in August.

CFO Andrae Matthews earned an associates degree in early childhood education and bachelor's and master's degree in human services. Her master's degree has an emphasis in non-profit leadership management.

The two have already hired several staff members and former Tutoring Tots preschool teacher Kathy Peterson to teach preschool. The academy's preschool classes will be offered for free to any child enrolled full or part-time at the child care center.

Wiggles & Giggles plans to operate initially from 5:30 a.m.-9 p.m. with the goal of eventually offering 24-hour child care seven days a week. The center is currently accepting applications from those interested in enrolling a child or children in the new child care. Please contact Jamie at (308) 995-7339 or Andrae at (843) 670-9298 for enrollment information.



Andrae Matthews (left) and Jamie Johnson plan to open a new child care center in east Holdrege.

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Phelps County Business Journal

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BRINGING STUDENTS BACK

Scholarships Available For High-Demand Jobs

Students interested in future careers in Phelps County are encouraged to apply for the 2018 High-Demand Jobs Scholarships.

The scholarships are provided by PCDC and the Phelps County Community Foundation and are intended to help students obtain training in high-demand careers in Phelps County.

The high-demand careers are in nursing, agribusiness and technology, diesel mechanics, engineering technology, mechatronics engineering, injection mold technology, electromechanical technology, tool and die making, construction trades and welding.

Applications are due February 15 and are available at www.phelpsfoundation.org.



Levi Woodring (left) and Jamie Bialas are two of many Phelps County graduates who have received high-demand jobs scholarships.