

Phelps County Business Journal

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PHELPS COUNTY, NEBRASKA



Phelps County By The Numbers

A recent study conducted by NPPD to help identify industries that would find it beneficial to locate in Phelps County also revealed some interesting labor statistics about the county:

94.2%

Population with a high-school diploma, which exceeds the state average of 90.5%. Residents with a bachelor's degree total 23.8 percent, which is 4% higher than the average of other surrounding rural counties.

\$51,396

Phelps County's median household income was \$51,396, which is higher than five of the other six surrounding rural counties.

6.3%

The poverty level of Phelps County is just 6.3 percent, well below the state average of 12.9 percent and the national average of 15.6 percent.

NEW STUDY HELPS FOCUS RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Targeting Growing Industries

Agriculture, Health Care, Manufacturing, Continue to Drive Local Economy

A new study pinpointed seven categories of business and industry that Phelps County should focus on in its future recruitment efforts.

But, it indicated also that economic development officials should continue to focus efforts on supporting and growing current local businesses and industry.

Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (NPPD) conducted the Targeted Industry study for PCDC at no cost as part of its contribution to the community. Results were presented to PCDC board members and key community leaders in mid-September.

Dr. Kenneth Lemke, economist, explained that he identified the industries that Phelps County should target by looking at what businesses were already doing well in the county as compared to the rest of the state and nation and then identifying what industries would complement these



Agriculture remains a driver of the local economy. The Targeted Industry Study recommends recruiting businesses to support the ag industry while also encouraging growth among other industries, such as manufacturing, to help diversify the economy.

existing strengths.

He narrowed the focus to industries that are already doing well locally, or local or outside businesses categories that are projected to grow faster than the national average, and industries that pay an average compensation of at least \$42,000.

"If we are successful in recruiting jobs that pay at that level, then we

lift the entire community," said PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery.

The seven broad categories that were pinpointed as possible targeted industries for Phelps County were

1) Crop and animal production and related manufacturing (including food processing)

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Study Reveals County's Labor and Population Trends

In addition to helping PCDC narrow down industries it should target in future recruitment efforts, the new Targeted Industry Study for Phelps County also revealed some interesting labor and population trends.

According to the study, "An evaluation of a region's current and potential employee pool is a critical step in identifying industries that will be a good

fit and promote future growth."

Here are some of the findings:

■ Phelps County has more jobs than people to work in those jobs, meaning that many employees are commuting to Phelps County to work. The study showed that Phelps County has 640 (or 16.2 percent) more primary jobs in the county than residents working in the county (4,590 people working in Phelps

County and 3,950 Phelps County residents working).

PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery sees these numbers as an opportunity. He hopes to partner with the Holdrege Housing Authority and other local groups to create more workforce housing to see if Phelps County can

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Governor Ricketts Will Help Launch PCDC Prosperity Project Campaign

Campaign Kick-Off Event Scheduled for October 13

Gov. Pete Ricketts and Department of Economic Development Director Courtney Dentlinger will be in Holdrege Oct. 13 to help launch the Prosperity Project 2 campaign.

The event is scheduled to take place at 4 p.m. at the Allmand Bros. Conference Center.

"This is a pretty big deal," PCDC Director Ron Tillery said of the state officials' attendance. "It suggests they see Holdrege and Phelps County as important to their agenda. We're steadily building a strong relationship with both."

PCDC is seeking \$1.1 million in private donations to help fund an aggressive five-year strategic plan that would bring 275 new jobs to the area, fill one-third of the Iron Horse Business and Industry Park, and turn 30 commuter families into full-time residents by 2021.

The private donations will provide the action funds (salaries and administration and supplies and expenses) needed to direct projects that will be funded through LB840 sales tax funds.

The LB840 funds will be budgeted separately and will be used as approved by 83 percent of voters in November 2015: 40 percent toward business retention, expansion and recruitment; 40 percent to infrastructure development, workforce housing developing the Iron Horse Business and Industry Park; and 20 percent to community growth, downtown improvement and quality of life enhancements.

The total cost of the 2017-2021 plan is \$3.475 million. About \$2.375 million is estimated to come from LB840 sales taxes with the remaining \$1.1 million from Prosperity Project 2 investors.

PCDC has identified several roadblocks to success that currently exist in Phelps County: lack of "shovel ready" business and industry property, uncompleted development of Iron Horse Business and Industry Park, lack of workers available for skilled positions and inadequate workforce housing.

Four strategies have been outlined to overcome those obstacles and grow opportunities:

PCDC FAQ

How were the original LB840 funds (first 15-year plan) put to use?

The LB840 program has played a pivotal role in a wide array of projects since its adoption in 2003:

- 50% of LB840 funds supported construction of the YMCA of the Prairie
- 50% of the funds supported:
 - \$2,000,000 – Revolving loan fund to support 24 projects
 - \$830,000 – Acquired Iron Horse Business & Industry Park
 - \$465,000 – Business recruitment assistance
 - \$280,000 – Downtown building & façade improvements
 - \$58,000 – Scholarships for 22 students

GO STRATEGY I: Help Employers Invest and Grow in Phelps County

This strategy includes initiating an outreach program with corporate headquarters of businesses owned by non-local companies and supporting workforce development and entrepreneurial efforts.

GO STRATEGY II: Aggressively Recruit Targeted Industry Prospects

Extending utilities and building infrastructure for the Iron Horse Business and Industry Park to make it "shovel ready" and creating business incentive programs that make Phelps County competitive are part of this strategy.

GO STRATEGY III: Improve Community Preparedness and Quality of Life

Talent recruitment, upgrading community aesthetics, business improvement grants and workforce housing are part of this strategy.

GO STRATEGY IV: Build a Strong Community Brand and Consensus

Promoting amenities and opportunities in the county, boosting social media and regularly communicating economic development accomplishments are part of the fourth strategy.

High-Demand Tech Jobs Pay High Salaries at BD

Local Manufacturer Hires Sixty Employees in 2016

A student with a two-year degree in electrical technology can land a first job with a salary of \$60,000 plus full benefits, tuition reimbursement for continued education and the chance to work on the cutting-edge of manufacturing technology.



Brian Deakin

Sounds like a sweet deal for most job seekers.

And, these high-paying tech jobs don't require a move to Lincoln or Omaha. They are located right here in Phelps County.

Already in 2016, BD in Holdrege hired more than 60 new employees, including many for high-demand tech jobs, as it adds new product lines and strives to stay ahead of the curve in manufacturing technology.

BD is an international company that manufactures and sells medical supplies and devices, laboratory equipment and diagnostic products.

"It's the best and worst kept secret out there," said Brian Deakin, BD human resources manager, about the well-paying high-demand jobs in Holdrege.

Paths to a BD Career

Jobs: To see careers available at BD, visit bd.com/careers/ or NEworks.nebraska.gov

Internships: BD also offers internships to anyone 18 and older during summer and spring breaks.

Scholarships: BD hopes to offer a new scholarship through the Phelps County Community Foundation in 2017 for a student attending a 2-year school and majoring in electromechanical technology.

In the future, Deakin said BD will continue to see a high demand for technical positions and will be competing with other businesses and manufacturers for job seekers with these skills.

Deakin wants to spread the word among students, parents and guidance counselors that for kids who are mechanical and enjoy robotics, computers or technology, this is a great career path and one that doesn't require the traditional four-year degree. BD is specifically seeking students with a 2-year degree or training in electromechanical technology, drafting or wind technology.

"The parents and guidance counselors need to understand what great opportunities there are here," Deakin said. "A lot of people have a real negative mental image of what manufacturing is. They think it's a dirty, dusty environment. Come out here and see our equipment. It's robotics.

It's electronics. It's clean. You are working in a great, safe environment."

Deakin said these jobs are in high-demand across the country because all manufacturers are using technology and automation to produce more and better-quality products. Students with this training may receive between 6-10 job offers right out of college.

Deakin has searched near and far to hire electrical technicians, set-up operators, electromechanical technicians and molding technicians.

He has conducted local career fairs that attracted job seekers from Iowa, Colorado and Kansas City; traveled to Virginia last spring to recruit military veterans with technical training; and has even invited groups of students from Nebraska community colleges to tour BD.

"We need folks to understand what's available right here early on in their education," Deakin said. "We get a lot of those folks who leave the state, and they don't really have to."

He encourages any local students who may be interested in future jobs in technology to contact BD, and he will be glad to arrange a tour.

"If you have a kid who is really good with electronics, computers and has some mechanical aptitude and likes working with their hands, working on problems and in cutting-edge technology, this is really the kind of job they should seriously take a look at," Deakin said.

BD Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Holdrege location in 2016

BD is celebrating 50 years in Holdrege, where it plans to continue operations for a long time with the recent announcement of a \$100 million investment in the local plant.

BD started its Holdrege operations on October 16, 1966, in a 12,000 square foot building with 50 employees. Today, BD's facility spans close to 400,000 square feet and it employs 670 associates from Phelps County and surrounding towns as far away as Lexington, McCook, Minden and Kansas.

Several activities have been planned in 2016 for the community and staff as BD celebrates its 50th anniversary. The grand finale celebration

will be a Tent Event at 1:30 p.m. on Oct. 11 with BD leaders and state dignitaries attending.

"We are really pleased to have been here for 50 years," BD Human Resources Manager Brian Deakin said. "It's something that BD looks at as a real blessing and opportunity to be here in the community, a real opportunity for us to partner and help grow this area of Nebraska, but also to help grow our business. We are hoping to have another 50 viable years ahead of us or more."

BD has expanded in Holdrege several times over the years including its most recent expansion in 2014. "Part of the investment you see in the plant — just the infrastructure and the



capital that's invested here — is a real indication that BD wants to invest in Holdrege because of its success," Deakin said. "It's a confidence that they have that we will be an important part of BD operations for years and years to come."

Road Project, Utility Upgrades Studied for Iron Horse

While no dirt has been turned yet on the Iron Horse Business and Industry Park since its purchase in 2014, plenty of behind-the-scenes work is being completed as local governments and PCDC staff and volunteers study road projects and utility upgrades on the 134-acre parcel.

Just as it took seven years of patience and persistence before PCDC was able to purchase land for a business and industry park, patience and persistence is needed once again as the property is developed into a more desirable location for potential businesses.

"Acquiring the property was awesome," PCDC Executive Director Ron Tillery said. "But, we can't just recruit a new business to plop down in the middle of a cornfield. We've got to do all of these other things to get ready."

The city and county have been discussing a joint project to upgrade Gustin Road from Fourth to 18th avenues to create an official en-



trance to the industrial park. Gustin Road runs east of Allmand Bros. and could see increased truck traffic with new industry.

Phelps County and the City of Holdrege are still studying plans and getting cost estimates for either paving with concrete or asphalt. Tillery recommends concrete because of projected additional truck traffic, and he is hoping that the

project could take place as early as the next construction season.

Work is also being done to study the availability of water, sewer and other utilities in the business park and to determine what types of upgrades may be needed. PCDC has also fielded inquiries from businesses interested in the property, including one local business.

Targeted

continued from page 1

- 2) Metal, metal products and machinery manufacturing
- 3) All other manufacturing (medical equipment, motor vehicle and trailer, etc.)
- 4) Wholesale trade
- 5) Transportation and warehousing
- 6) Professional, scientific and technical services
- 7) Health care

Tillery said the next step in the process will be for the recruitment committee to meet and designate which of these industries would resonate best with the community. Once those industries are further narrowed, PCDC can tailor its marketing efforts toward those industries.

That information will also help PCDC identify trade shows to attend and determine which industry consultants they should build relationships with.

Labor Statistics

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encourage commuters to become residents.

"Developing workforce housing is going to be very important moving forward," he said. "We are going to need a lot more houses than we've ever had before," Tillery said.

■ Phelps County has high-paying jobs. The study showed that in 2014, Phelps County's median household income was \$51,396, which is higher than five of the other six surrounding rural counties. Phelps County's per capita income of \$27,126 also was higher than all of the other counties in the study area and 99.2 percent of the state average of \$27,399.

The high-paying jobs available in Phelps County are part of the reason why so many workers are willing to commute to Phelps County.

"That's a good thing to have," economist Kenneth Lemke said. "That's attractive to businesses."

According to the study, one contributor to the high level of compensation earned in the Phelps County labor force is the large percentage, 64.3 percent, of the population ages 16-64 are working at least 35 hours per week. This is the highest of any of the

counties in the study area and much higher than the state average of 55.2 percent and the national average of 47.1 percent.

Because of the higher income levels in Phelps County, the study said the poverty level is low. The percent of people living in poverty in Phelps County is 6.3 percent, well below the state average of 12.9 percent and the national average of 15.6 percent.

"However, Phelps County's high compensation levels suggests low wage businesses may struggle to find workers," the study concluded.

■ Phelps County has a highly-educated labor force. In Phelps County, 94.2 percent of the population has a high school diploma. Phelps County also has a high percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree (23.8 percent), which is higher than the average of other surrounding rural counties (19.8 percent).

■ Phelps County's population has declined, but it had the smallest population decline of any of the surrounding rural counties. Phelps County's population in 2014 was estimated at 9,187, which is a 5.7 percent decrease from its population of 9,747 in 2000.

RuralMED Works to Sustain Rural Health Care

The recruitment of three new doctors to the area is just one of the benefits so far of the new RuralMED management services organization based in Holdrege.

RuralMED is owned by Phelps Memorial Health Center and Family Medical Specialties and was formed in March 2015 to provide management and administrative support services to area clinics and hospitals.

The goal of RuralMED is to ensure quality health care continues to exist in the region by recruiting physicians and other specialists, ensuring quality health care, reducing costs through group purchasing, increasing efficiency by sharing resources and staff and helping clinics and hospitals navigate the ever-changing world of health-care regulations.

"Our ultimate goal is to sustain health care in rural Nebraska," said RuralMED COO Bethanne Kunz. "So, we will work within Holdrege within our own clinics but also expand out to other hospitals in our area to sustain services and make sure that services remain in these small communities."

The leadership staff team began forming in early 2016 with the hiring of CEO Joshua VanBoening. Kunz was hired as the COO in June, and the most recent hire was Colby Gray as CFO. There are other staff as well.



Bethanne Kunz



Joshua VanBoening

VanBoening and his staff will build partnerships among area health-care providers and facilities with the concept that all will be stronger by working together.

One of VanBoening's responsibilities is doctor recruitment, and he has secured commitments from three physicians who will begin their practices in Holdrege in the summer of 2018 after they finish their residencies. The doctors are Zach Egger and Katie Thelan, a husband and wife team originally from the Wood River area, and Krista Stoecker, who is from eastern Nebraska.

Kunz said RuralMED is securing partnerships with the hospitals in Alma and Lexington and that eventually physicians or other staff could work in any of the locations, filling in as doctors retire or go on vacation. RuralMED staff will work on priority areas as designated by hospital leaders, and the hospitals may also benefit from cost savings in group purchasing.

RuralMED has also assumed management services for home health care in Holdrege and



Colby Gray

Lexington, increasing efficiencies among those organizations.

In the coming year, RuralMED will help the two Holdrege medical clinics and PMHC as they transition to a new MediTech electronic medical records system, which will make it easier for patient records to be transferred between the organizations (if the patients allow the access). Right now, all three entities are on different systems, and one is still on paper. Cambridge and Alma medical facilities will also transition to MediTech, allowing for easier transfer of records for patients in those areas as well. That transition should be complete by November 2017.

"We are hoping that the transitions of care between the hospitals and clinics will be much better for the patients and the hospitals," Kunz said. "We won't have to fax large amounts of information anymore."

RuralMED may also initiate outreach programs, such as community wellness and nutrition programs, and will continue to reach out to rural communities to ensure continued health care for rural residents.

"They can be assured that they will have continued services in their communities," Kunz said. "In the nation, there has been a lot of hospital closures. So, hopefully by us working together and forming this cooperative, we can maintain the viability and sustainability of some of those hospitals and clinics so those patients don't have to drive and can have those services available in their community."

For more information about RuralMED, visit the website at www.ruralmed.net.



New Tennis Complex Opens

The City of Holdrege has installed a new six-court tennis complex at the North Park. The courts replace the previous two courts and centralize the play of tennis in one location making it easier to conduct the tennis tournaments and youth leagues that are organized throughout the year in Holdrege.

The courts opened for play in September, and the first high school tennis meet was held at the courts on Sept. 13. The players and fans were able to play at one location instead of at several locations throughout the city.

Super 8 Changes to Rodeway Inn

Loren and Shelly Schroder have sold the Super 8 Hotel in Holdrege to R & G Hospitality, a Central Nebraska company, and the name and brand have changed to Rodeway Inn, which is a part of Choice Hotels.



The new owners have made minor changes to amenities, otherwise no major

renovations or changes are planned.

Employees will remain the same.

"The new owners are very happy with the staff in place and thankful that the previous ownership group built such a solid team of professionals," a representative said.

The Schroders, who are rural Holdrege residents, owned the hotel for 10 years prior to the recent sale.

Breinig Diesel Builds New Hwy. 183 Shop

Breinig Diesel is constructing a new building just north of Holdrege on Highway 183 and will be moving from its current location at 700 South Brewster Road (south of the airport) to the new location around January 1.

Loren Breinig opened his truck repair shop four years ago and services and repairs heavy-duty trucks for farmers and commercial haulers in central Nebraska and northern Kansas.

Breinig said the new location is more user friendly and provides more exposure to his business as the highway is popular among truckers because it's the shortest distance between I-80 in Nebraska and I-70 in Kansas. The new location also allows him to own the building instead of rent.

Breinig and his wife, Jo, both work full-time at the business, and he employs two other full-time workers and a part-time worker. He is hoping to hire two or three more mechanics when the new location opens.

Brewery Seeks Holdrege Location

Mark Kraus and Jason Hines of Holdrege have filed the legal papers to officially launch Lost Way Brewery Company and are currently seeking a location in downtown Holdrege to begin the process of setting up shop.



Bob & Norms Moving to New Location

Bob and Norm's Quality Flooring, also known as the Floor Dude, is moving to a new location at the former Quilter's Delight building at 323 West Ave.

Owner Paul Wagner, who has 36 years of experience in the flooring business and has owned the local store since 2008, decided to purchase the building and move his business after learning about traffic counts at various locations in town. The move will give his store more visibility over his current location at 511 West Ave.

Wagner plans to transform the historic downtown building into a modern and comfortable carpet display showroom. The building has a second entrance on the north side where he plans to offer discounted carpet sales to serve all income levels.

Wagner said Bob and Norm's provides customers with a variety of flooring options at various price levels, educates consumers about the best flooring options to fit their needs and offers warranty service after the sale if needed.

Wagner's building at 511 West Ave. is currently for sale.

"Our goal is to be in downtown Holdrege," Kraus said. "We want to be a relaxing, entertaining destination that brings people downtown and enhances the numerous small businesses we have in the area."

Kraus said they need a location that has between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet with at least 750 square feet on slab to hold the heavy brew-house equipment. They are open to either leasing or purchasing a building.

Once they secure a location, it could still take up to a year before federal licensing is completed and they can actually brew or sell beer.

Although they are not in business yet, Kraus and Hines are looking to work with local organizations to have tastings, where they are legally able to, of home brewed beer for various charity or tasting events.

Space Available in F. Johnson Building

The historic F. Johnson Building in downtown Holdrege has a main-floor professional office available for lease. The space is under construction and can be finished to the specifications of a future renter.

The suite is approximately 1,535 square feet and could also be divided into two spaces of 658 square feet on the east side and 877 square feet on the west side.

The space has modern upgrades and includes up to 15 foot ceilings, original wood floors, an exposed brick wall, more glass at the entrance and signage on west side of building, if desired.

Owner Robert McCormick said the space would be a good fit for a professional office, retail store or art gallery. For more information, contact McCormick at (308) 991-8195.

McQuillan Transitions to Farm Bureau

Chris McQuillan, former ag and commercial lender at Great Western Bank, has joined the team at Farm Bureau Financial Services as a sales associate.



Chris McQuillan

McQuillan will help clients prepare financially for the future with products and services that protect families, individuals and businesses.

McQuillan, originally from Greeley, graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree

in business administration.

He is involved in the community as treasurer of the Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce, past president of All Saints Catholic Church parish council and was recently selected to participate in the Nebraska LEAD program.

He lives in Holdrege with his wife, Heather, and children Lizzie (3) and Max (1).

Steve Kness Returns to FirstTier

Steve Kness, former Market President at Great Western Bank, has returned to FirstTier Bank as a senior vice president.



Steve Kness

Kness, who has been in the banking industry for more than 40 years, will be working mainly with commercial loans. He worked at FirstTier for nearly 20 years before joining Great Western in 2011.

Kness grew up in a rural community in Iowa and has always enjoyed serving in a country bank.

Steve is married to Dana, and they have one son, Jarad, who serves in the Navy.

Steve currently serves on the Rotary Board, the Phelps Memorial Health Center board and the city's CRA committee. In the past, he has served on the Holdrege Public Schools Foundation board, the Phelps County Community Foundation board and the PCDC board.



ANNOUNCE YOUR BUSINESS NEWS:

Does your business have a new employee, an expansion or other business news to announce? If so, please submit information to PCBJ newsletter editor Kristine Jacobson at krjacobson@q.com.

Mussman Promoted to Ag West

Paul Mussman has been promoted to president of AgWest Commodities and Cash Marketing Alliance.

Mussman joined AgWest in 2004 and has held several positions, including serving as general manager since 2010. He has gained a solid understanding of the risk management industry and the guiding principles that have proven to be successful for AgWest.



Paul Mussman

Mussman graduated from Fort Hays State University with degree in ag business. He also served in the Army Reserves for 15 years and was deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq and Qatar.

Paul lives in Crete with his wife, Rebekah, and their three children: Colin, Ashton and Isabella.

Outside of work, Mussman enjoys working on his family's farm, where he can exercise his passion for agriculture and marketing. Paul also volunteers for Nebraska's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

Steve Knuth is stepping aside as president to set a solid foundation for the next generation of AgWest. He will remain involved in program directives, customer communications (including presentations), and special projects.

Anderson Joins Phelps Memorial

John Anderson, Pharm. D., RPh, has been hired at Phelps Memorial Health Center as a pharmacist. He earned a bachelor's degree in



John Anderson

mathematics from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1992 and a doctorate of pharmacy from the University of Minnesota in 2016.

Dr. Anderson is a native of Eustis and worked in corporate finance on the east coast for several years

before beginning pharmacy school in 2012.

Dr. Anderson is looking forward to living in Holdrege and practicing at Phelps Memorial Health Center.

"My family has doctored in Holdrege for more than 50 years, which was a big factor into me returning to this area to practice," he said.

Dr. Anderson joins other pharmacists, Bob Miller, RPh, and Jon McClymont, Pharm.D., RPh.

Woods & Durham Hires Cunningham

Katie Cunningham has been hired as an accountant at Woods and Durham CPAs in downtown Holdrege.

Cunningham will be helping farmers, individuals, and businesses with tax preparation and planning and other financial services.



Katie Cunningham

Cunningham is originally from Miller and graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 2009 with a degree in business with an emphasis in accounting.

She worked in Oxford for Kim Lueking from 2011-2013 and has worked at Dana F. Cole in Lincoln for the past three years.

She is excited to be back to central Nebraska, where she is closer to her family.

In Lincoln, Cunningham served on the board of two non-profit organizations: Fresh Start, a transitional shelter for homeless women without custody of children; and the Northeast Family Center, an early childhood development center.



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Return Service Requested

Learn more news about business and development in Phelps County by signing up for the PCDC e-newsletter.



Phelps County Business Journal

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Business Journal Reaches 1,000

The Phelps County Business Journal is distributed to more than 1,000 readers locally and across the state. The purpose of the publication is to highlight economic development in Phelps County to encourage further growth and momentum.

Recipients of the newsletter include officials with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Nebraska Department of Labor, media representatives across the state, local and statewide public officials and Phelps County business owners and leaders.

The business journal is a great way to get the word out to a large statewide audience about all the great business and economic development news in Phelps County!

If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please email Stacy Pafford at PCDC at stacy@phelpscountyne.com.