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S.T.A.R.T. Exchange Vol. 03, No. 02

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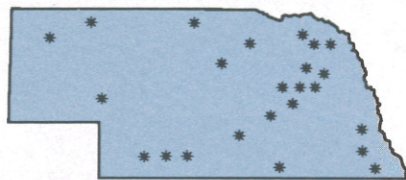
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START



Exchange

A NEWSLETTER FOR S.T.A.R.T. COMMUNITIES

Vol. 3, No. 2
Summer 1992

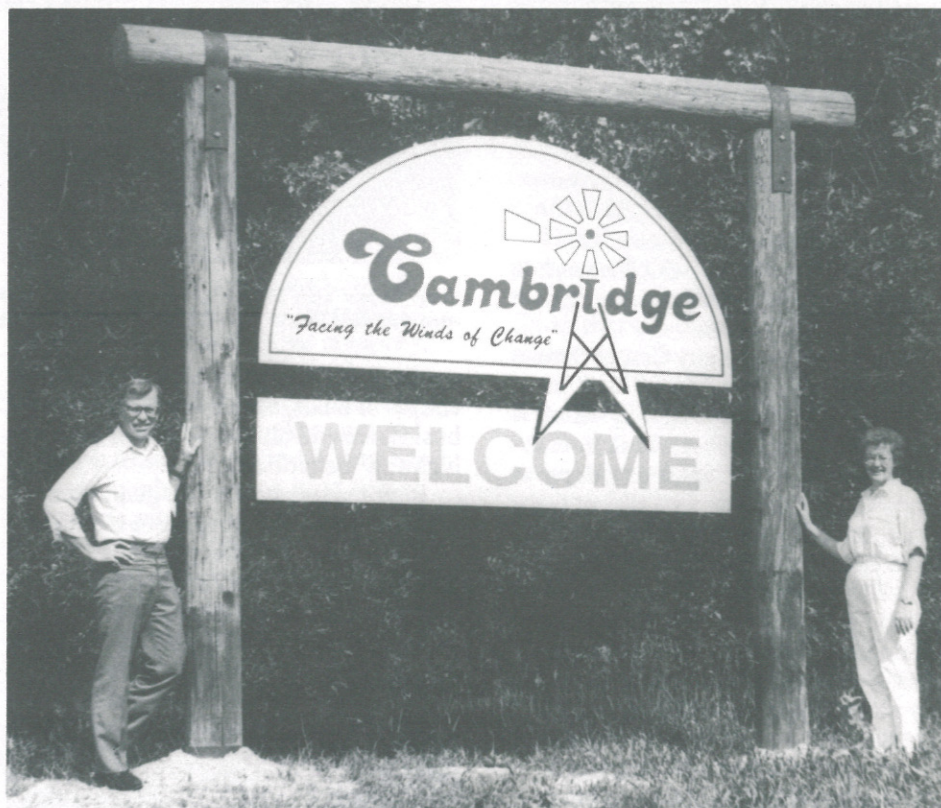
Cambridge Packs History In Run For Future

Cambridge S.T.A.R.T. leaders knew early on that they could achieve their goals quicker and better by hiring an economic development professional, someone that could "give the necessary time every day," as Local Leader Paul Liess puts it.

That's how Sharon Hueftle found herself in what she terms "a very progressive community." For the past year she has commuted from her home in Eustis to fulfill the half-time position of Director of Economic Development, providing Cambridge with a strong direction for the future. She will become a full-time mother after the birth of her baby this summer.

Her appointment turned out to be a balance of luck for both sides. Sharon boasts, "You won't find a better school system or hospital care system, offering half-a-dozen clinics and pharmacies." The 1,050 residents of Cambridge, on the other hand, got themselves a CPA and experienced business developer who spawned a keen eye for tourism and taught old-timers a lot about their own history.

A 16-page book of Cambridge history sells for 50-cents, and is as appealing to residents as it was to cross-state bike riders who camped there June 7. The booklet also serves an increasing number of visitors who come for the natural springs at Sky Chief Springs Ranch, or to tour a country school house, a log house or the barn built with long wooden pins rather than nails. After a guided tour to the horse thief den, visitors go home talking about pioneer days when Mike Messel



"Greetings" from Local Leader Paul Liess and Mayor Barbara Langley.

Cambridge Calrion Photo

was said to have bought the den for a 50-cent gold piece and a mouth harp.

Before S.T.A.R.T. and Hueftle's sharp eye, visitors to Johnson Lake likely came "self contained," toting food and supplies, with no idea about offerings in Cambridge. New signs now tempt vacationers with shopping and stopping in Cambridge.

The town is teaming with other regional groups, attractions and the

four counties from the Nebraska-Colorado corner to develop a Southwest Nebraska visitors guide and to promote area history on the cowboy, the Earth Lodge at Stockville, Medicine Creek Days, Massacre Canyon (site of the last big battle where the Pawnee lost to the Sioux) and a re-enactment of a western "Horror in the Night." In June, a workshop

(Continued on page 4)

Blair Guarantees "A Promise of Quality"

Blair isn't about to wait until it's in trouble to bolster its economy. "We want to take charge. It's evident Blair doesn't have problems of losing industry and youth, but we don't want to wait for the world to happen around us," S.T.A.R.T. leader Dan Hunt says with a punch. Blair's innovative steps include an interest rate buydown, subdivision financing, a community center and even a merchant guarantee.

The "Blair Guarantee" will deliver satisfaction of retail price, product and service. By late July you'll see car stickers, signs and symbols that guarantee quality at a suitable price. Employee training sessions will give certified courtesy know-how. Dissatisfied buyers can contact the Chamber of Commerce, who may justify concerns with a \$5.00 gift certificate.

Three housing developments are in the works, boosted by the Housing Task Force that less than a year ago worked out a subsidy program for utilities with the City Council. This task force is now a committee of the Chamber of Commerce, which is working for state and federal funds to improve existing homes.

Plans for a Community Center "are an ambitious goal" by July, 1992, "but it's OK to have ambitious goals," Hunt believes. The Recreational Task Force sees the Community Center as a draw for new industry and as a quality of life service for residents.

The Cooperative Business and Retail Efforts Task Force adopted a long title and matched it with longer and more unified retail hours. Several stores, a bank and the telephone company now are open until 8 p.m. on Thursdays.

Businesses that are new or expanding and improving can obtain an interest rate buydown from any bank in Washington County, an innovative incentive of the Gateway Development Corporation.

Hunt was president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce when he took over the S.T.A.R.T. leadership two years ago. He now is president of the Chamber and will become president of Gateway next year. He is associated with Huntel Communications, a division of Huntel Systems.

Blair is consistent in its "look ahead" approach. Even the



Local Leader Dan Hunt (center) checks new housing development projects with Steering Committee members Rod Storm, City Administrator, and Sandra Ellis, Housing Task Force Leader.

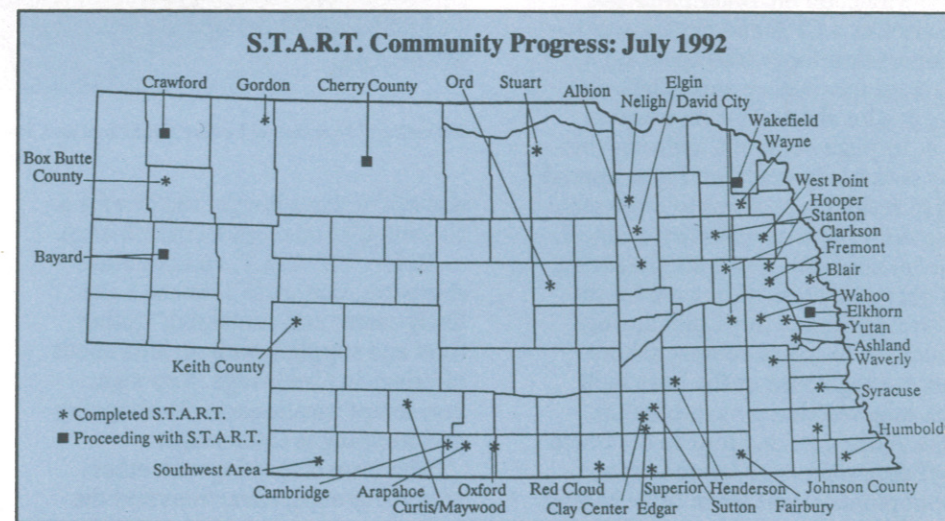
approaches into town, except for a couple of miles, have been claimed by businesses and clubs for "adopt a highway" beautification.

Blair leaders hope their guarantee of satisfaction will bring more travelers on these highways. The town is prepared, aided by a handy calendar of events in the *Blair Enterprise*, cooperation between organizations to not compete with events at the same time, weekly pancake feeds, frequent

meetings at Dana College and closer retail parking as soon as a new lot is completed, a remedy aimed primarily at relocating employee vehicles.

"What has come is a spark. There is a definite change of attitude in the community. We're doing so many things. Everybody is working together."

Blair Leader Dan Hunt



Community & Economic Development I · D · E · A · S

♦ Guideline for Special Events: "Match Your Mission" and Showcase Your Skills

It takes long-term strategy, supported by employment opportunities and affordable services to attract new industry and residents.

But with a little ingenuity and an abundance of volunteer hours, you could triple your town's population in eight hours or less. It's a special event, staged to bring in visitors and their dollars in one day, as well as provide an exciting vehicle for your residents to work toward and talk about all year. Your town could earn itself an enviable reputation!

Special events might raise an impressive sum of money. Or they might be geared to create an impression. Or they could do both.

How to Begin

Determine your purpose, expenses and potential income, and then consider these factors:

- List and evaluate your town's strengths, needs and skills of residents.
- Define persons and other resources that you can tap for underwriting or advertising income, entertainment, food service, signs, promotions, management, photography and other special services.
- List all the individual and group publics, in your town as well as within a 100-mile radius, that are or could be influenced or affected by each of you or the town in general (relatives, churches, schools, business associates, vendors, visitors during the past two years, former residents, ethnic groups, people who paid their traffic tickets, others who overlooked them).
- Brainstorm for a list of special events. Such sessions also strengthen teamwork.
- What's the endurance record for

this event? Can we add new features periodically to attract both former and new audiences?

Special Techniques

People like to eat, but your income at food concessions is limited by how many you can serve every minute. Fast, efficient movement is the secret. A volunteer is apt to chat or be unfamiliar with serving line speed. Consider asking a local restaurant or food service to be a co-sponsor, and as a public service arrange for their personnel to volunteer their services. They receive valuable publicity, and you receive skilled servers who can generate more income.

Approach a potential underwriter with a balance of benefits. You are asking the assistance of that company, but you in return should provide name recognition or other no-cost benefits that give the decision-maker enough incentive to say "yes" to your request.

Keep in mind that you want somebody else's money to work for you. Don't plan events for closed groups—such as a church bazaar whose members simply buy each others' offerings. Bring in new publics. If you show them a good time and good products, their comments will "ripple" to others and become your promotional chain to an ever-expanding audience.

Develop good traffic patterns and provide the required special services for the handicapped.

Be Easily Identified

Clearly define the different offerings and attractions with signs, arrows or assigned people. Place signs above six feet—once the crowds are in, bodies will block lower signs. More attention will be gained from a movable attraction. Use balloons or streamers, and place a fan on them if you really want to create a stir!

Do something that stimulates every sense. Carry freshly baked bread through the crowds. Pipe music (lively as opposed to funereal) that fits the occasion. Bright colors will stimulate positive responses.

Develop a catchy name, logo or phrase and use it consistently to build recognition. Avoid choosing a name so clever that nobody knows what it means.

All activities should fit the theme or "match the mission." Be aware that minds can grasp a singular theme far more successfully than a fragmented pattern. Multiple themes will cause confusion, which results in frustration, not knowing how to respond and even withdrawal from participating or pitching in funds.

Train all workers to be friendly, informed, neat in dress and attentive in stance (a relaxed form does not communicate interest or good service).

by Betty Davis, APR,
S.T.A.R.T. Exchange Editor

♦ Edgar Selects "Pride of the Plains"

Edgar wants to be known as the "Pride of the Plains," the name submitted to the slogan contest by eighth grader Trudy Messerli and announced at Edgar's Town Hall meeting in June.

Part of this 600-person town's pride and "having a good time producing it," according to volunteer LeAnn Michel, results from S.T.A.R.T. task forces

that have built a downtown mini-park, planted trees on Memorial Day at the Community Club and established a day care center.

Edgar has an edge on funds, and chose S.T.A.R.T. to help guide revitalization of Main Street, made possible by a \$1 million designated bequest from Leonard Sugdon.

♦ Wal-Mart Offers Funding

Communities that have Wal-Mart and SAM's Clubs are eligible for grant money to boost local development initiatives.

Proposals may be submitted by economic or industrial development organizations, Chambers of Commerce or city development agencies and must be for the express purpose of community economic develop-

ment and/or job creation. Beautification, promotion and tourism projects are not eligible.

For information or to apply, contact Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Corporate Affairs Department, Attn: Economic Development Coordinator, 702 S.W. 8th Street, Bentonville, AR 72715. The phone is 501-273-8807.

♦ Every Event Depends on a Good Audience

Don't be like the theatrical director who concentrated so much on staging his production that he forgot he needed an audience to respond to make his work pay off. Stage your publicity with as many good lines as the playwright and with as fine a delivery as the star.

A newspaper, radio or television editor is more inclined to give you good coverage on the no-cost news and public service formats if you:

- have a worthy story to tell,
- present the facts accurately and concisely,
- respect his/her time by being brief and businesslike with your news release and a follow-up call,
- suggest photos and focus that make the story special for him/her and appealing for the broadest possible public.

Look at your news the way an editor does. Editors ask, "Will my readers/listeners benefit from this news? Does news of this event affect 50 percent of my audience or at least more persons than other events occurring the same week?"

Avoid calling editors during deadlines (11 a.m. for daily papers, specified days for weekly papers, the hour preceding news for television, within a half-hour of radio news).

Be crisp, informative and friendly in a few words.

Focus on the hometown tie-in or special features.

Editors are not responsible for the

success of your event. They owe you nothing. Their obligation is to inform and serve their public. Never threaten, hound or chastise them and don't question their judgment.

Remember that media sacrifices a paid advertisement when they place your special event on the news or public service channels.

by Betty Davis, APR,
S.T.A.R.T. Exchange Editor

♦ Leadership and Agreement Are Strengths

Great Plains communities are in transformation but are adapting, and their survival depends on leadership and the ability to agree on the community's future with a strategic plan.

These findings were discussed in a recent study conducted by Denver's Center for the New West and funded by the Ford Foundation and the Aspen Institute.

The study suggests that communities have been affected by a declining economy due largely to global competition. Other influences are the switch by mass markets into niche markets, broader knowledge acquired from information and technology, entrepreneurship and innovation, rapid turnover in products and markets and the growing importance of leisure and recreational activities.

♦ S.T.A.R.T. Communities Enter "Third Wave"

A national nominating panel has nominated Nebraska's S.T.A.R.T. Economic Development Program for a "Third Wave" development award from the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED). The Third Wave award recognizes programs that demonstrate impact and excellence in design and performance, with strategic approaches to program management and higher standards in public policy.

The nomination indicates that S.T.A.R.T. communities have approached the Third Wave of economic development, designated by CFED as a focus on government enterprise. The First Wave of state economic development, prevalent about two decades ago, was centered on industrial recruitment. The Second Wave during the 1980s concentrated on producing higher quality goods and services to keep up with global competition. The shift to the Third Wave is concerned with efficient management and leverage of public resources. It involves shifting government response from simply treating symptoms to addressing and remedying underlying causes.

Source: Corporation for Enterprise Development. *The 1992 Third Wave Development Awards: Recognizing Impact and Excellence In State Development Policy*. 1992.



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✉ Please tell us what you know...or would like to know!

News about my town and how I'm helping S.T.A.R.T. progress:

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Southwest Nebraska Towns Teams for Progress

"We grew like topsy," is how Jerry Preston describes results of S.T.A.R.T. ventures of Benkelman and their associated Southwest Nebraska towns of Stratton and Haigler. "We were looking for an economic development pattern, learned about S.T.A.R.T. from Stratton and decided to merge with our neighbors."

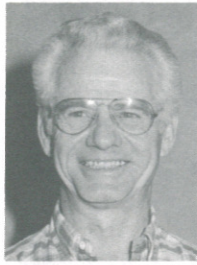
Merging hasn't been all that easy. Barriers of parochial or "singular ownership" interests needed to be lowered to be replaced by group efforts. Leaders had to adjust their thinking and their manpower to cope with increased tasks and with distances in cultures as well as in miles between communities.

Preston first looked for "a silver bullet," but he and the towns' leaders soon recognized that "nobody would be riding into town on a white horse to rescue us." Instead, improved participation between communities has come about by persistence, a constant and often frustrating search for volunteers and cooperative attitudes.

"We tend to isolate ourselves," Preston notes, "but we know that to succeed we must come together, and that special efforts are necessary to keep in touch with a distant Haigler and to prevent overlooking all surrounding smaller communities."

Tourism is keeping the towns unified. Highway 34 is the entry into Nebraska, and with increased promotions and services for fishing and hunting, it is viewed as the area's "silver lined road" to Swanson Lake, Enders, the state fish hatchery and other attractions. Haigler is the first stop in Nebraska and is a S.T.A.R.T. target for selling fishing and hunting permits.

Benkelman



Jerry Preston
Benkelman Post Photo

Benkelman must draw in traffic from the highway that was routed around the town years ago. They'll do it with entry signs and new services that include expanded parks, RV parking, signs and a sand volleyball court. They envision a vacated gas station area at its west entry as becoming the ideal spot for recreational vehicles.

The town has new sidewalks and a new path to improve its image and provide more jobs for its young people, who are "leaving in droves," according to Preston. His own three youngsters, who have migrated to South Dakota and Florida, "would stay in a New York minute if they could make a go of it. Some young folks do stay, but at tremendous personal cost because there just aren't enough jobs or pay for them."

Benkelman is on a main railroad line, adjacent to the highway and on the western edge of the corn belt, "a good position to attract industry," Preston points out, and he's ready to "plow through the brick walls and politics" to do it.

"We knew we would have to help ourselves, but we didn't know how to go about it. S.T.A.R.T. gave us the structure."

S.T.A.R.T. Leader Jerry Preston

Haigler



JoAnn Tafoya
Benkelman Post Photo

With the leadership of Haigler's Mayor and S.T.A.R.T. Local Leader JoAnn Tafoya, this community of 225 will build a "nice little town" image and be "more than a dot on the map" for travelers on Highways 34 and 27. Her vision is to build on small town values, promote the existing "nice store and

restaurant" and provide additional gas service, which she believes will attract more tourist stopovers.

Haigler is especially proud of its new elementary school that, for best economics, was constructed of metal. But folks wanted a better appearance, and "an outstanding number of volunteers" raised \$25,000 to cover it with brick. Now they're half way toward raising \$60,000 to build the American Legion Hall, which will allow more community activities.

Haigler has "a nice park on Main Street," new lights on the ball field and an unlimited field of dreams that includes promoting home craft businesses.

"It's good to know people are looking ahead with you in an organized way."

Haigler Leader JoAnn Tofoya

Stratton



Peggy McDonald
Benkelman Post Photo

Peggy McDonald and her Stratton S.T.A.R.T. committee also have their eye on tourism. They are ready to put up area visitors in a newly redecorated motel that they may manage during the Summer of 1992 while the retiring owner searches for a buyer. Two businesses recently relocated, leaving manufacturing buildings available for new industry.

The town handles redirection well, and the conversion a few years ago of the hospital to the Hitchcock Retirement Center provides 13 apartments, activities and meals for as many as 40 to 100 persons every day.

McDonald invests in volunteers to accomplish long-term projects that are on the agenda following their mid-June Town Hall meeting.

"We needed a long time to get underway since we're with such a large group over such a far distance. It's short-term projects such as our sand volleyball court that will give us visible proof to keep us going toward long-term development."

Stratton Leader Peggy McDonald

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Linda Jones (left) accepts plaque from Lt. Gov. Maxine Moul during Benkelman town hall meeting on 6/15/92.
Benkelman Post Photo

Cambridge Promotes History

Continued from page 1

on tourism promotion (the first of its kind in the state) brought together leaders from surrounding communities and agencies, including the Prairie Lake County Travel Council, Highway 6 Association, University of Nebraska at Kearney students, experts from S.T.A.R.T. and the Nebraska Department of Development. Tours and hospitality seminars also are planned for Cambridge residents.

Liess calls his Cambridge co-workers "people of vision." Their long-term goals include expanding businesses and service-oriented facilities in the downtown area and exporting regional services. Their focus is on rural health development, improved housing, a possible retirement facility and relief from water scarcity, which would require improved communications and irrigation between two southwest Nebraska valleys.

Liess credits volunteers for the new and more active community boards, improved softball and baseball facilities, downtown flower beds that were planted by ages ranging from a Girl Scout troop to retirees, and progressively active organizations and service clubs, especially Rotary and Lions whose efforts keep up improved appearances at both ends of town.

"We have a hard time—I think almost everybody does—because we don't have a person who can devote all time every day to the project," Liess observes. "Having a part-time Director of Economic Development this first year has been a great boost and the right match for volunteerism."

He stresses the importance of cap-



Cambridge Clarion Photo

Liess and the Mayor test the 3Rs at the country school house.

turing the willingness of the volunteer over an extended period if programs and projects are to succeed.

Liess cautions that "in the beginning a big number of people were willing to get involved. We pruned that number, but that may not be a good idea. We need more volunteer manpower, and I think it's better to find an assignment for everyone."

"Our S.T.A.R.T. Town Hall meeting and a retreat with community leaders helped us know what we wanted and needed, and we defined that in a mission statement. Everybody needed responsibilities, and I needed a measurement."

**Cambridge Economic Development
Director Sharon Hueftle**

Polk and Thayer Seek "Healthy" Development

Polk County health services task forces are recruiting a new physician, intend to publish a list of available health services and will stage a Health Fair/Career Day in 1993. In the meantime, residents are alerted to services via radio announcements and in a quarterly newsletter that premiered in February.

Thayer County will focus on these goals: maintain quality health care for a declining population, educational programs on wellness and home health care, increased referrals to satellite clinics, additional professionals and shared arrangements for technical services, independent living support for the elderly and development of mobile health care services.

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Center for Public Affairs Research
Peter Kiewit Conference Center
Omaha, Nebraska 68182

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