

# County Perspectives

*The newsletter of economic development in Lincoln and Minnehaha Counties*

## Communities make new schools essential growth elements

**O**n Friday nights in autumn, there's little debate about the importance of schools to local communities. The bleachers are crowded and the fall night vibrates with the sounds of marching bands and unrestrained cheers as the home team tussles with a nearby rival. Those are the moments when dollars—and votes—for educational development seem like a great investment.

But the value and impact of school construction on the growth of a community transcends victory on the football field—and towns in our two-county area are well aware of that fact. School construction has topped \$100 million during the past five years, and as the regional population numbers continue to swell, so does the need for new schools. New schools are not just constructed to add space for additional desks, but to meet the demands of a changing world as well as rapidly changing communities.

"With increased attention on workforce development numbers and skills," said Jeff Eckhoff, executive director of MCEA and LCEDA, "business owners realize that good schools mean educated, trained employees, progressive towns and great places to live."

Like every school district in Lincoln and Minnehaha County, the schools profiled in this issue have experienced growing pains. These most recent examples, along with the other communities in our counties, have replaced old, crowded schools with new, technology-friendly schools and are adjusting rapidly to a modern dynamic caused by the growth of Sioux Falls near their city limits.

"We realize we're building for the future," said Jim Holbeck, superintendent in Harrisburg, where a new \$28 million high school is currently under construction,



*The new Harrisburg High School, scheduled to open in the fall of 2009, is currently under construction.*

"so that we don't have to build again in a couple of years."

Harrisburg has completed two elementary schools that lie within the city limits of Sioux Falls, most recently the \$8 million Journey Elementary. These neighborhood schools are encouraging the construction of new homes around the school, adding to the economy and bringing new families to the region.

The growth of Sioux Falls as an opportunity base has boosted Harrisburg enrollment numbers almost exponentially. This year's system-wide enrollment increased by 250 K-12, but the most dramatic numbers are the comparison of class sizes at the end of the educational pipeline and at the beginning. This year Harrisburg will graduate 81 seniors, but 224 students enrolled in kindergarten.

"When we open our new high school in the fall of '09, we'll have about 450 kids," Holbeck said, "but we built the commons area to accommodate 900 students, a number we expect to reach in eight years."

The growth plan for Harrisburg includes construction of three more elementary schools—two in Sioux Falls and one in Harrisburg—plus a middle school somewhere north of Harrisburg.

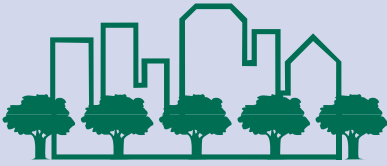
"We know if we build a quality school and fill it with quality education," Holbeck said, "people will **choose** to locate here—and stay here to raise their kids."

At the West Central district, covering Hartford and Humboldt, the communities voted to spend \$13 million on three projects. The district built new elementary schools in both Hartford and Humboldt and did an extensive remodel of the 6-12 site in Hartford, adding a regional

*Continued on page 2...*



*West Central built two new elementary schools, one in Hartford and this school in Humboldt.*



**Lincoln County  
Economic Development Association  
Board of Directors 2007-2008**

- Todd Nelson, LCEDA President, At-Large
- Bob Lier, LCEDA Vice-President, Canton
- Mary Thoen,  
LCEDA Secretary-Treasurer, At-Large
- Dan Cotton, Beresford
- Brad Howard, At-Large
- Jon Klemme, Harrisburg
- Virgil Musch, Lennox
- Jenni Pick, Tea
- Mike Metivier, Worthing
- Dennis Wheeldreyer,  
Lincoln County Commission

## County Perspectives

Volume 9, Issue 3

The newsletter of economic development in Lincoln and Minnehaha Counties is published three times yearly by LCEDA and MCEDA  
P.O. Box 907, Sioux Falls, SD 57101  
605-339-0103



**Minnehaha  
County  
Economic  
Development Association  
Board of Directors 2007-2008**

- Marv Wieman,  
MCEDA President, Crooks
- Jim Clark,  
MCEDA Vice-President, At-Large
- Dennis Olson,  
MCEDA Secretary-Treasurer, Brandon
- Carol Ackerman, At-Large
- Jason Pittman, Baltic
- Erik Miller, Colton
- Mark Downs, Dell Rapids
- Owen Wiese, Garretson
- Rick Freemark, Hartford
- Allen Schmeichel, Humboldt
- Eric Krouse, At-Large
- Mike Wendland, Rural Mayors
- Neil Winterton, Sherman
- Don Johnson, Valley Springs
- Anne Hajek,  
Minnehaha County Commission

## Communities make new schools essential growth elements

*Continued from page 1...*

library, administrative offices and classrooms. West Central's growth numbers, about 65 students in K through 12 since 2005, show the consistent growth that has necessitated replacing outdated buildings. The district replaced two buildings dating back to the 1920s, plus a variety of portable classroom structures.

West Central superintendent Jeff Danielsen says the willingness of West Central district voters to fund construction at all the school sites shows their confidence in the value of education in the communities.

"These new buildings are a symbol of our growth and viability," Danielsen said. "Taxpayers voted to pass the bond issue to make sure we have quality facilities so we can continue to grow."

The West Central projects were done in what Danielsen calls a "cost effective" manner. The existing and highly functional gymnasium spaces at both new elementary schools were retained from the old structures, maximizing the construction dollars for all the projects.

The Brandon Valley school district is also feeling the challenge of growing enrollment numbers. The district has passed a \$23 million bond issue to construct a new indoor activity center and a two story classroom addition to its Brandon facility, in addition to a new elementary school inside the Sioux Falls city limits and a classroom addition to the Valley Springs elementary school.

Besides the housing developments pushing toward Brandon from Sioux Falls, the city of Brandon has been seeing consistent housing growth in its own city limits. While the number is down slightly this year, about 100 new homes are built in Brandon annually.

"We're seeing controlled growth here," said David Pappone, superintendent at Brandon Valley schools. "The new east side sewer system in Sioux Falls opens up literally thousands of acres of land to residential development. The new elementary school on Six-Mile Road is telling potential neighbors that we'll be there for them."

The Brandon Valley district works with enrollment "triggers" to growth, rather than a timeline, to gauge the right time to build new schools. Pappone said that 90% of capacity is the trigger for the high school, which is why new classrooms are being built right now. And like Harrisburg, Brandon Valley is facing some dramatic jumps in student numbers.

"This year, we're graduating 180 students," he said, "and we're bringing in a freshman class next fall with 280. And the average size of the classes coming into the high school after that is about 240-250. We know we're going to need more space!"

The addition of space for learning will continue to attract families, encourage new construction and help our area grow well into the foreseeable future.

"We build schools to serve our communities," said Pappone. "But the fact is that when we build good schools, communities develop around them."



*Brandon Valley's newest elementary school is currently being built on Six Mile Road inside the Sioux Falls city limits.*

## Our area named in AARP's "healthiest hometowns"

The September-October issue of *AARP The Magazine* rates the healthiest places in the United States to live, placing Sioux Falls at number eleven on the Top Twenty list. The editors combed through the government records of hundreds of cities for more than 20 "measures of vitality," looking not only at the physical aspects of a community, like clean air and water, but also at the health and habits of the people who live there.





Mark Downs



Jenni Pick



Dennis Wheeldreyer

## Area leaders join LCEDA and MCEDA boards

Two Lincoln County leaders and one Minnehaha County elected official have joined the boards of directors for LCEDA and MCEDA. Mark Downs, a city alderman in Dell Rapids; Jenni Pick, economic development director for the City of Tea, and Dennis Wheeldreyer, Lincoln County commissioner, have all been chosen to help guide the county organizations.

**Mark Downs** is business development manager for Geo-Synthetics. A native of Madison, Downs worked with that community on a development project planning streets in the initial design of the industrial park. He has lived in Dell Rapids for five years, and is in the second year of his term as a city alderman. Downs hopes to work with local economic development officials to form a vision for the community's future.

**Jenni Pick** is very familiar with Tea, having grown up there. A business management and marketing graduate of Dakota State University, Pick's training is important in her current position. She cites the Tea Area Schools as an essential part of community development in Tea, where citizens and the business community have stepped up to make possible scholarship funds, the local football field and other vital elements to enhance educational quality.

**Dennis Wheeldreyer** is returning to the Lincoln County Economic Development Association board. As a

county commissioner, Wheeldreyer understands the challenges and public rewards of economic development. He believes that economic growth is the stimulus that helps companies and families throughout the county to thrive, and that development is the keystone for those endeavors. A retired teacher, Wheeldreyer is a forty-year resident of Lennox and applauds the growth which has occurred there.



## Fusion Plastics opens in Lennox

A ribboncutting ceremony was held September 17 in the Lennox Industrial Park for Fusion Plastics, a rotational molding manufacturer. The company's new 50,000 square foot building has been producing parts since August and currently employs eight people. The rotational molded plastic products will have a focus on diverse major markets in agriculture, marine, RV and custom contracted industries. Fusion Plastics is currently manufacturing a wide variety of livestock products for Sioux Steel Company, including watering tanks, feeders and grain bin roof ventilators. Chief Operating Officer Brian Rawlings thanked the Lennox Development group for its help in establishing the business in Lennox.



Fusion Plastics COO Brian Rawlings, center, cuts the ribbon at the company's new Lennox plant.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

### MCEDA and LCEDA annual meeting is November 6

The Minnehaha and Lincoln County Economic Development Associations will hold a combined annual meeting on Thursday, November 6, 2008 in the Starlite Room at the Holiday Inn City Centre in downtown Sioux Falls. On the agenda is a report on development achievements of the past year in both counties, with a combined annual report for 2008 to be distributed at the meeting.

Featured speaker at this year's meeting will be R. Slater Barr, new president of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation. Barr recently moved, with his wife and five children, to Sioux Falls from Carroll County, Georgia, where Barr was the



Slater Barr

executive director of a regional economic development group just west of Atlanta. He will share his perspectives on regional development and value of cooperation in advancing the prosperity of a multi-community area.

The annual meeting will also feature a report from Jeff Eckhoff, executive director of both MCEDA and LCEDA. A social hour will begin at 6:00 p.m., with the program slated to commence at 7:00 p.m. The meeting is free and open to the

public. Community and county officials are encouraged to attend, along with interested business people from both counties.

## *Annual meeting demonstrates our strengths*

The annual meeting of the Lincoln and Minnehaha County Economic Development Associations is a celebration of partnership. It is fitting that this year's keynote address will be delivered by Slater Barr, the new president of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation. Our partnership with the Sioux Falls economic development group is illustrated in every aspect of economic development from joint hostings of inquiring companies to the development of new industrial parks.

In fact, the partnership between Sioux Falls and its county partners in LCEDA and MCEDA are often used by the state as an illustration of effective, coordinated regional development. Our partnership for progress brings local government, community economic development organizations, financial institutions, utility companies and other groups interested in growing Minnehaha and Lincoln counties together to achieve more than those individual units can on their own. The LCEDA and MCEDA success story is studied by other regions in our state—and by neighboring states, as well. We're proud of that.



Barr's message will undoubtedly draw on his experience as a regional economic developer and on the spirit of cooperation and partnership which make regional development possible. The annual meeting gives us a great opportunity to reflect on our partnerships and to report to you on our activities.

We hope you'll consider attending our annual meeting, **November 6** in the Starlight Room of the Holiday Inn City Centre in downtown Sioux Falls. This central location for our annual meeting has always facilitated a good turnout from both counties and we look forward to providing an evening of information, networking and good fellowship for everyone there.

Please mark your calendar for **6:00 p.m.**, Thursday, November 6. You can help us give a rousing welcome to Slater Barr and learn more about another excellent year of progress in Minnehaha and Lincoln counties.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED.

P.O. Box 907  
Sioux Falls, SD 57101

County Perspectives