

# Rural Revitalization Initiative Newsletter

## Des Moines Municipal Schools

### Statewide Initiative Gets National Attention

The Rural Education Bureau (Public Education Department), through the NM Rural Revitalization Initiative, is responsible for promoting the socioeconomic health and vibrancy of rural schools and communities throughout New Mexico. This state is the only state with a rule governing the revitalization of school districts and communities. It has attracted national attention for the initiative. Des Moines Schools is one of twenty-one participating districts, from a total of 44 school districts identified as "rural". As funding permits, schools districts and communities can be added to group.

Revitalization efforts have been expanded with the addition of business incubators on a test basis in a few districts, including Des Moines. A mechanism is in place to sustain ongoing efforts in economic development and to assist in the development of new ones. The Rural Education Bureau offers training sessions for its participants.

New Mexico's revitalization initiatives are based on the premise of holistic school/community development. The schools play an integral role in the revitalization of the community and the two are inextricably lined in their efforts to create and maintain sustainable socioeconomic strength and vitality.

For the Des Moines initiative, a Steering Committee was organized in the Spring of 2008. The Committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month. Everyone is welcome to attend. **For more information, contact Steering Committee members: Justin Bennett, Garrett Bosarge, Karen Brown, Jaynee Burchard, Midge Graham, Kelly Hill, Phyllis Shannon and Pam Sorensen.**



Working together during the Des Moines Clean-up.

### Consultants Help with Strategic Planning

The RRI Steering Committee and the Initiative has benefited from consultant services by Dr. Tena Hoyle and Todd Bartee from the University of Wyoming, funded by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). With their guidance, Committee members have worked through a strategic planning process that is supported by an "assets approach" to community development, that is looking first at the positive things in our school community. In all of its work, the Committee is dedicated to an idea of *honoring the past; celebrating the future*. From the strategic planning process, four goals and aligned objectives and strategies have evolved:

**Goal 1: Community Mobilization and Development.** Objectives: 1) Establish and maintain effective communication, 2) establish and maintain broad-based leadership and engagement, 3) expand collaborative educational opportunities, 4) create a beautiful community.

**Goal 2: School Improvement.** Objectives: 1) Provide an environment that supports positive physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development; 2) provide a school and community environment that prepares students for post-secondary endeavors; 3) provide sustainable programs and services that meet health wellness needs.

**Goal 3: Economic Development.** Objective: 1) Increase community viability to a broader economic market.

**Goal 4: Accountability Through Effective Management and Monitoring:** Objectives: 1) Establish and maintain broad-based leadership and engagement; 2) develop, maintain, and effectively utilize all aspects of the strategic plan; 3) establish and maintain a communication plan; 4) ensure delineation of roles, relationships, and responsibilities of boards, committees, working groups, and individuals.

#### Special points of interest:

- *Public Education Department has designed the initiative.*
- *Des Moines is one of twenty-one participating school districts.*
- *For initial planning, emphasis on "positive attributes" of the community.*

***Honoring the Past;  
Celebrating the Future!***

#### Coming Soon: Campus Clean-Up on April 25th!

School District community members are encouraged to participate in a spring cleaning activity at the school campus on Saturday, April 25, from 8:30-1:00. Projects include tree-trimming, weed-eating, trash-pickup and hauling. Participants can bring gloves, gas weed eaters with fuel, long handled branch cutters (loppers), pickup trucks, a lot of energy and community spirit. It's a great opportunity to show support for our school district and its community.

#### We Want You!

As the Rural Revitalization Initiative Steering Committee works to develop and support community development projects, it will organize workgroups of community members with specific interests and energy. **Everyone is invited to participate.** Please let a Steering Committee member know if you would like to work for a specific project. Current workgroups include Community Cleanup, Education and Training, and Economic Development. Other workgroups will be formed and individual volunteers will be needed as projects are organized.

**Join a Workgroup!**

## Des Moines Schools RRI Community Projects

On July 20th, forty or more animals showed up at the schoolhouse, with their owners, for vaccinations. Dr. Donald Reif, Veterinarian, offered his services for the **Community Vet Clinic**. Participants enjoyed dog biscuits and people biscuits provided by Steering Committee member, Karen Brown, who organized the event.

Pam Sorensen and Kelly Hill organized **Community Clean-Up Days** in Des Moines on September 27th and Folsom on October 18th. Generous residents donated tools, time, and refreshments. Farmers & Stockmans Bank donated lunch.

Justin Bennett worked with the RRI Steering Committee, NE Soil and Water Conservation District, Union County Farm Bureau and Union County Extension Service to organize **Commercial Wind Energy Meetings** for interested landowners. Frank Fallon, Attorney, provided legal information. The result is the organization of Landowner LLC's to further study wind energy as an economic development initiative. The local organization is Sierra Grande Landowners Association, [sgla@bacavalley.com](mailto:sgla@bacavalley.com).

Des Moines area Senior Citizens have benefited from two email classes, instructed by Karen Brown. A level one class was an introduction to email and a level two class emphasized specific skills, including attachments and sending/receiving. Classes were conducted at the high school computer lab. To support that learning, a computer at the Senior Center has been brought out of storage and is up and running in the Center's lobby area. The community can expect additional computer-based classes for Seniors and others, an example of lifelong learning in a community that values education.

In the Fall, RRI was pleased to support the organization of a *Meet the Candidates* forum just before the November election. Local, district, and state candidates were present, as was a nice turnout of community voters. It was an evening well spent.

An Economic Development workgroup is being formed. Its organized work will begin following the development and implementation of regional and local needs assessments and broad strategic plans under the direction of the Eastern Plains Council of Governments. Residents in our communities are encouraged to participate in those studies and projects that evolve.

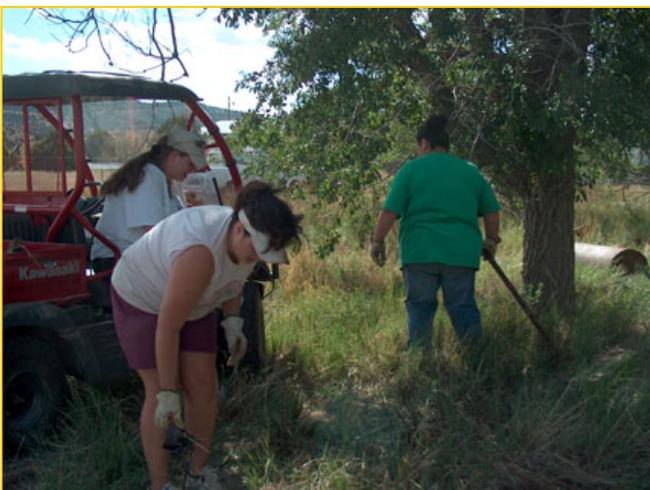
We **CELEBRATE** the successes of the School-Based Health Center and the positive difference it has made for our school district, its families, and the community at large. RRI absolutely supports the work of the School Health Advisory Committee and its staff and looks forward to increased health services and programs.



*Steering Committee member, Pam Sorensen, helps with clean-up day in Folsom.*

## Business Incubator Center

Through school based enterprises, the Business Incubator Center project has an important mission to help create new opportunities for economic development. The goal is to encourage student involvement in the development of economic, educational, and community programs and incentives designed to help revitalize the northeast area of New Mexico. Important objectives are: 1) to develop a school based business that can be used as a learning lab for students; 2) to provide strategic planning for the total project; 3) to encourage and mentor students in the entrepreneurial process; 4) to provide a week long business plan development workshop in June 2009; and, 5) to provide opportunities for students to participate in business contests/conferences.



*Community members Peggy Green, Jalane Osborn and Lucia Lopez assist with clean-up around Des Moines.*

This is just the beginning! The BIC will be offering an expanded array of programs, projects, and educational opportunities that will open the door for re-integration of school and community in a positive way.

The BIC will be working to strengthen the community economically and socially by helping students develop partnerships and collaborations with community-minded organizations — governmental, educational, non-profit, or business.

Special recognition is given to Michael A. Rivera, professional trainer at Biz Ed-Ventures, for his advice and guidance in the areas of general planning, business development, and youth entrepreneurship.

Sunny Hill directs the BIC program. Her office is at Des Moines High School. For additional information, contact Sunny Hill, Des Moines Schools, 575-278-2611, [shildms@bacavalley.com](mailto:shildms@bacavalley.com).

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