

# Rural Revitalization Initiative Newsletter

Des Moines Municipal Schools

## Honoring the Past...Celebrating the Future!



The start of school reminds us that, among our many traditions and community assets, is a very special school district that represents the values of small, rural communities in northeast New Mexico. Forever, our communities have stepped up to support their schools and the professionals who are responsible for shaping the educational futures of children. Des Moines Schools produces a special kind of young adult, who: 1) values lifelong learning, 2) understands his/her responsibility to a working society, 3) knows about commitment to self, family, community, work, 4) appreciates and respects adults who came before to make things better for him/her, 5) loves his/her country and respects its leaders; 6) understands and appreciates the differences in people, and 7) can set goals and follow dreams.

As a new year begins, the RRI Steering Committee looks forward to big ideas and worthwhile activities that bring people together to support our schools. We can never take for granted school success and the individual successes of hundreds of

people who once were children in our schools. We encourage everyone to get on board; to support school activities and programs. Our school district is a special asset.

The RRI Steering Committee is committed to an assets-based approach to community development. For more information, contact Steering Committee members: Justin Bennett, Garrett Bosarge, Karen Brown, Jaynee Burchard, Midge Graham, Kelly Hill, Phyllis Shannon and Pam Sorensen.

## Community Projects

The **school campus cleanup**, on April 25th, was a success; time well spent to do something special for the school and the community. Volunteers came together to trim trees, rake and move trash, mow grass and cut weeds, and tidy up the landscape at the Health Center. A half day was well spent and the results were exciting. Hard work was followed by a nice lunch together. Mr. Bosarge planned for the cleanup day. Pam Sorensen and Kelly Hill organized and supported the project on behalf of the RRI Community Beautification Workgroup. Thanks to volunteers, adults and students, who worked so hard.

Organizational activities specific to **commercial wind energy** continue in our communities and all of Union County. Sierra Grande Landowners Association is the local organization that works to study wind energy and economic development initiatives that might result.

Senior citizens in the area have continued to learn **computer technology** specific to their needs. Karen Brown coordinates that training for using email and other computer resources. The community can expect other training activities including a class on E-Bay.

We continue to celebrate the successes of the **School-Based Health Center** and the differences it has made for the school district, its families, and the community at large. As school gets underway again, we can expect enhanced services and valuable programs and projects.

Carl Kallansrud, Director of the **Small Business Development Center/Mesalands Community College**, visited Des Moines on July 7th. His activities that day included individual planning guidance with local residents and time at the RRI Steering Committee meeting. He is one of several resources available.

### *A Big Thank You to...*

**Carl Wingo** for all the "above and beyond" work he does to keep the picnic area west of Des Moines looking great.

**Baca Valley Telephone** for their help in printing and mailing the RRI quarterly newsletter and for their support of the school's rural revitalization projects.

**Mark your  
Calendars!**

**BACK TO SCHOOL - August 19**

**Art Street Fair - September 26**

**Half Marathon - September 27**

### **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 are being formed and individual volunteers will be needed as projects are organized.

**Join a Workgroup!**

# FIRE SAFETY WORKSHOP

On June 4th and June 11th, the Education/Training Workgroup organized and presented a two-part Fire Safety Workshop to prepare the Community for fire prevention, fire emergency preparedness, response and recovery. With consistently dry summers and long periods of drought, training was timely and essential. At two meetings, 65 participants reviewed prior information and learned new concepts related to fire safety management.

Basic learning concepts centered around the publication, **Living with Fire: A Guide for the Homeowner**, courtesy of New Mexico State Forestry and New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Terrell Treat, US Forest Service, presented information and materials to the group. Information about wildfires included: 1) Importance of human behavior in a wildfire situation, 2) Wildfire threats by flames, radiated heat, and flying embers, 3) What homeowners can do to reduce threats, 4) Ideas for home access zones and defensible space zones, 5) Protecting structures, and 6) specific ideas for defending homes and property. For an electronic version, log onto [www.nmforestry.com](http://www.nmforestry.com).



Jim O'Bryant, Union County Wildfire Coordinator, worked hands-on with participants in a related tabletop exercise and later in a field experience setting at the Mandala Center. Ernie Lopez, from NM Forestry, assisted with those presentations. At the Mandala Center, participants walked through the surrounding area on a planning/prevention exercise; then heard about developing safety plans and an evacuation plan for the Center. Information was useful for participants to take to their own homes and surroundings. Chuck Ferguson and Chuck Zobac demonstrated the use of **Barricade**, a fire gel retardant that can be used ahead of wildfires or as thermal protection for equipment, vehicles, infrastructure, fuel tanks, utility poles, fire support equipment, mine entries and buildings under threat. Smokey the Bear came to spend time with children who were present.

It was an event with the community spirit expected here. Families attended together. Neighbors shared stories and concerns about fire safety. There was time to honor volunteer firefighters in the Capulin, Des Moines, Folsom, Grenville communities and the outlying areas. Important discussion was about the recruitment and support of those who volunteer and there were ideas shared about the roles that women and children can play in the total volunteer programs. And, there was food. On both evenings, participants enjoyed meals and homemade desserts together.

Thanks to Jim O'Bryant, who coordinated the programs and to other supporters, including: Kiowa National Grasslands US Forest Service, New Mexico Forestry, Union County Extension Service, Union County Office of Emergency Management, Northeast Soil and Water Conservation District, Union County Farm Bureau. A special thank you to Des Moines Schools and The Mandala Center for the use of facilities and other support. Very much appreciated is a monetary gift from the NESWCD that provided for food and supplies, and Justin and Kodi Sumpter for hours of work. *It was a job well done by the Education Training Workgroup!*

## Summer Kids' Academy



Volunteers did their work and children gathered for *Kids' Academy* on July 7th-9th at the school. The middle of summer was clearly a good time to get elementary kids together to learn and have fun. In the mornings, they enjoyed basketball camp by Jim Doherty and a variety of "workshops" in the afternoon. Cathy Kennedy presented arts/crafts time on Tuesday. On Wednesday, Judy Jolly taught about identifying and understanding insects



and, on Thursday, Debbie McDonald coordinated and presented lessons about healthy snacks. Children prepared snack foods and enjoyed sampling those. Lunches were provided each day by Service Organization for Youth (SOY) out of Raton. Community volunteers assisted with the learning activities, picked up lunches in Raton, and supported organization and preparation activities. Thanks to Kodi Sumpter for being the over all leader for the Academy. The activity was organized and presented by the Education/Training Workgroup. Donated funds from the Healthy Schools Community Grant and the Rural Revitalization Initiative helped make the event possible.