

# BUILDING BRIDGES OF HOPE

*Catholic Campaign for Human Development brings Grant Funds for needed projects in Rural Communities*

*By Kara Storey*

The Village of Cody, Neb., has been without a grocery store for over 12 years. In this “food desert,” the closest one is over 80 miles away round trip.

The lack of a local grocery store doesn’t just affect food choices, but also the town’s population. It’s difficult to draw new people to the area with a lack of services. So staff from the Cody-Kilgore Unified Schools system brainstormed an idea of opening a student-run grocery store.

“It would provide a valuable service to the community and perhaps help people want to live in the area with the ability to buy groceries,” said Stacey Adamson, a teacher in the school district. “It would also provide a learning lab for our students where the learning was real life and not in a text book, as well as learn leadership and management skills that would prepare them for the next stage of life. This would bless those students and also be one more reason for parents to choose Cody-Kilgore.”

In the three photos above, students and other volunteers from Cowboy GRIT work at building the new grocery store in Cody, Neb. A grant from the CCHD made the new straw-bale building possible. Photos submitted by Stacey Adamson.



**Kara Storey**



## Feature Story



The photos on this page capture volunteers helping to build a new home for Adam and Alyssa Campbell, thanks to a loan by the Housing Development Alliance in 2012. Left: Alyssa and Housing Development Alliance Board Member Ellen Peach (second from left) build the back deck with help from more volunteers. Above: The Campbells pose with the volunteers who made the new home possible. Right: Shingling the new roof of their home. Below Right: Adam Campbell and his father work on framing early in the process. Photos submitted by Scott McReynolds.



So Cowboy GRIT, Inc. (Growing, Revitalizing, Investing, Teamwork), was formed to oversee the project. The community banded together and built the store, but no money was left to pay wages or buy inventory.

Then, through the Center for Rural Affairs, GRIT heard about grants from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, an office of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. With the help of Beth Hyser, development coordinator at NCRLC, GRIT applied for, and received, a \$60,000 grant to pay people to work in the store and also for consulting services to make sure that the business systems are set up correctly.

Hyser proved to be an invaluable asset during the application process, Adamson added.

“Beth proofed and helped us understand some of the technical language,” she said. “She also helped us find some of the census numbers that the grant called for. Honestly, we were starting to run out of steam and the CCHD grant not only injected money into our project, but also renewed our hope that we could change lives in our community this very year.”

### CCHD Grants

NCRLC secured its own CCHD grant in Fall 2010. The purpose of the grant was to provide technical assistance to rural groups, such as Cowboy GRIT, interested in applying for their own CCHD grants, with the hope that more funds could go to rural-focused projects.

“NCRLC did some analysis of the CCHD funded groups and it was very clear that 4 to 6 percent of grants were going to rural-focused projects, which is a very small portion of their funding pool,” said Hyser, who heads up NCRLC’s outreach.

The findings led NCRLC executive director, Jim Ennis, to approach CCHD with the research, who gave it some consideration.

“The appeal of NCRLC is that we do have a network and a relationship with dioceses, bishops, religious communities and individuals, and are focused on rural issues, so we would be a good partner to do this kind of outreach,” Hyser said.

While there’s still a ways to go, in just two years NCRLC has seen a doubling of the amount of groups they work with submit a pre-application. In 2011, Hyser helped six groups submit pre-appli-

cations, with five submitting the full application. All five received funding. In 2012, that number submitting pre-applications grew to 12. Ten were invited to submit full applications.

Hyser doesn’t write the applications, but gives feedback and clarifications when needed. She also helps with interim reports for groups that have received grants, as well as the reapplication process. Hyser stresses to groups the importance of adhering to Catholic teaching.

“We want high-quality



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applications, that's really the point of this process," Hyser said. "Once you clearly understand the process, that hopefully makes for a better quality application."

### Getting the Word Out

Over the past two years, Hyser has sent more than 1,000 e-mails and has been in contact with over 90 groups. She has also done two teleconferences to reach out to rural groups applying for CCHD grants. NCRLC also ran ads in 31 diocesan newspapers, reaching 1.2 million readers. Hyser has found that the most important thing she can do in convincing organizations to apply for CCHD grants is letting them know the grants exist.

"Some of the groups are so small that you're not going to be able to Google and find them," Hyser said, adding that almost half of the pre-application groups this year were start-up organizations. "They don't have the capacity for an online presence. You need to network to find them."

NCRLC also got the word out at regional conferences and business meetings. Scott McReynolds, of the Housing Development Alliance, Inc., based out of Hazard, Ky., first heard about NCRLC's consulting assistance for CCHD grants when Jim Ennis passed through his town almost two years ago looking for groups that were eligible.

"We were invited to meet with him and that's how we first found out about it," said McReynolds, whose organization develops and finances affordable housing and home repairs in four of the poorest counties in America.

McReynolds admits that until he met with Ennis, he hadn't heard of CCHD grants and that even if he did, he doesn't know if he would have considered applying for one.

"The biggest thing they did for us was just convince us that it was worth applying, that we were close enough to meeting the requirements,"

McReynolds said.

"We met the mission, but for some of the other requirements we were close, but not quite there, and they convinced us to apply

and then 'get there.'"

That encouragement led Housing Development Alliance to receive a \$55,000 grant last year. The organization used the money to hire a loan fund coordinator whose goal it is to grow the loan program.

"Beth has been great to work with," McReynolds said. "It has been great to have someone familiar with the process to help us navigate applying."

### Looking Ahead

Now with the 2013 application period behind them, NCRLC is on the hunt for more rural groups that could benefit from CCHD grants.

"We will continue to diversify our outreach to the 40 targeted dioceses and welcome inquires from rural groups from across the country," Hyser said.

That diversification will include more national and regional teleconferences and following up with contacts at colleges, universities, and regional/national trade associations such as a national association of Cooperatives.

NCRLC also continues to work with past grant recipients. Both Cowboy GRIT and the Housing Development Alliance have reapplied for a second year of CCHD grants to continue their growth and progress. ○

## CCHD Grants 101

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development has been around for 42 years.

There are three types of grants:

**Community Development:** Through community organizing efforts, low-income people gain the ability to identify barriers, brainstorm solutions and take action to change the problematic structures and systems in their communities.

**Economic Development:** Community-based organizations and businesses that create just workplaces, provide good jobs and develop assets for low-income people that are owned by families and communities.

**Strategic National Grant Program:** These grants are focused on particular situations where broader, strategic, innovative and focused action is needed in a region or nationally. Proposals accepted on a rolling basis.

**It's a two-step process to apply.** Pre-applications are due between Sept. 1st – Nov. 1st each year. Those invited to complete the full application must do so by Dec. 15th.

**For more information on requirements and how to apply for CCHD grants, visit [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com) and under "Programs" click on "Consulting Assistance for CCHD Grants."**



**All of the organizations below received assistance from NCRLC in applying for CCHD grants, and all were also awarded funds in 2011.**



**Neb.**

**Cowboy GRIT – Rural Grocery Store**

*Economic Development* – Social Purpose and Training

*Project Sponsor:* Cowboy GRIT, Inc. GRIT is an acronym for “Growing, Revitalizing, Investing, Teamwork.” Non-profit that serves the high school students and Village of Cody, Neb.

*Project Focus:* The project will focus on establishing entrepreneurship classes and on-the-job training program for the student workers in the new straw-bale constructed grocery store in Cody (population 150).



**Ill.**

**Grower Trainee Project**

*Economic Development* – Social Purpose and Training/Business Incubator

*Project Sponsor:* Decatur is Growing Gardeners (DIGG), non-profit started in 2009 in Decatur, Ill.

*Project focus:* Our model is to train and support low-income individuals in establishing their own commercial vegetable-growing operations on vacant land owned or leased by DIGG in Decatur, Ill.



**Fla.**

**Access Resource Center/Needs Assessment**

*Community Development*

*Project Sponsor:* Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice, Inc., faith-based non-profit that serves ten counties in southwest Florida.

*Project Focus:* This pilot project will focus on identifying and training local leadership in community organizing techniques and establishing an Access Resource Center in the rural community of Clewiston.



**Kan.**

**Salina Microloan Pool Project**

*Economic Development* – Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)

*Project Sponsor:* The Catholic Charities of Salina, Inc., a faith-based non-profit that serves 31 counties of North Central and Northwest Kansas.

*Project Focus:* Provide short-term affordable microloans, financial education, and peer leadership circles for economically vulnerable and low income households in five rural counties as an alternative to predatory lending companies.



**Ky.**

**Home Improvement Revolving Loan Fund**

*Economic Development* – Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)

*Project Sponsor:* Housing Development Alliance, Inc., a non-profit that serves four distressed Appalachian counties in Kentucky.

*Project Focus:* The project will focus on improving and expanding the Revolving Loan Fund for home purchase or improvements into three adjacent rural counties.

**Questions? Do you have a possible CCHD project idea? Please contact James Ennis (515) 270-2634, email: [jim@ncrlc.com](mailto:jim@ncrlc.com) or Beth Hyser (651) 962-5955, email: [beth@ncrlc.com](mailto:beth@ncrlc.com). More stories and CCHD guidelines can be found on our website at [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com).**