Gathering brainstormed innovative solutions

Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development

at Kansas State University There's a storm forming in south central Kansas. Looks like a strong one. But there's no need to take cover and there's no alert issued by the National Weather Service. This isn't a thunderstorm. It's a brainstorm specifically, a big rural brainstorm, generated from the creative mind of rural advocate Marci Penner. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Marci Penner, whom we've featured before, is an author and founder of the Kansas Explorers Club, the Kansas Sampler Foundation, and the We Kan! initiative. Marci, based at Inman, has long been an advocate of rural Kansas.

idea for a special type of gathering. and focused on ideas that could re-It wasn't a conference or a seminar. sult in grassroots action--some by It came to be called the Big Rural Brainstorm, and it was held in Newton in February 2012.

of the gathering was to "bring together people from every aspect of rural life in order to find common possibilities and create innovative grandfather's conference. It was grassroots solutions that are achievable, especially by volunteer-led communities.

As with other Marci projects, it was driven by possibilities. The planners asked, "What if we brought a couple of hundred passionate rural Kansans together, stirred up the energy, and looked at common

the time we leave? What if the room was full of PowerUps to mix with all those who have been working at this As articulated by Marci, the goal for years? And, what if we had a lot of fun doing this?

Those questions led to a special type of gathering. This was not your different from the meetings put on by representatives of government agencies. This was planned by private sector, non-profit rural advocates. Instead of one big corporate sponsor, there were lots of small sponsorships from individuals and local businesses.

Some 200 rural Kansans attended issues from a completely different the Big Rural Brainstorm. They point of view? What if we all were came from Kansas communities committed to a "renewed rural" and large and small. People even came

burg, population 189; Morrowville, linking inventors and investors, community foundation, developpopulation 164; and Morland, population 159 people. Now, that's

As promised, it was different from just another conference. Here is a list of the keynote speakers:..... Oops, there were no keynote speakers. All participants had the opportunity to speak up, network and brainstorm together, in groups large

The Big Rural Brainstorm began with self-introductions of people who described why they love their rural communities. The format which followed consisted of diverse breakout sessions, StandUp reviews, appointments and group discussions on particular rural topics. Discussion topics included rural housing, utilizing the elderly, technology, rural tourism, foodies,

education, rural grocery stores and more. Participants were encouraged to think big and bold. Of course, there was food and fun along the way, including Lost Trail Root Beer

The Big Rural Brainstorm definitely brought together diverse perspectives on rural issues, but what about that element of action which is all-too-often missing from the conferences people attend? Marci and the planners had ideas on that

They organized the program so that, on the final morning, many participants were invited to come forward and declare specific action steps they would take when they returned to their home communities. A starting a community garden and to that question next week.

ing a rural entertainment network and internship programs for businesses, and doing an inventory of

For more information, go to www.kansassampler.org.

The storm has cleared over south central Kansas. It was a strong one, alright, but it wasn't a thunderstorm or tornado. It was a brainstorm. We commend Marci Penner and all those involved with the Big Rural Brainstorm for making a difference by stimulating creative thinking and moving people to action. Besides rain, that's the type of storm we need in rural Kansas.

And there's more. A major part of the Big Rural Brainstorm had to do with PowerUps. What are sampling of those actions included PowerUps? We'll learn the answer

Internship applications now being accepted for fall

The office of Congressman Tim recent graduates who want to learn process and constituent services." Huelskamp is now accepting ap- firsthand how Congress operates

Interns may be asked to complete plications for the fall 2012 internand how federal legislation affects a variety of tasks, including day-toship program in the Washington, Kansas to apply," Congressman day office work such as answering D.C. and Salina, Dodge City and Huelskamp said. "This is a unique phone, writing letters and assistexperience in which to obtain greating with media clips. In Addition, "I encourage college students or er understanding of the legislative interns may be assigned to assist

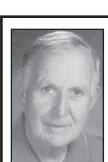
with constituent casework or at- hours to accommodate their course the internship program and the aptend Congressman Huelskamp's public events through out the First

Students will be give flexible

schedules, but hours in the Kansas plication form can be found at hueloffices generally run from 9 a.m. to 5 skamp.house.gov/internships. p.m. This is an unpaid internship.

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Mix powdered sugar, softened cream cheese and remaining 2 eggs until smooth, about 1-2 minutes. Pour on top

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