

Gathering brainstormed innovative solutions

By Ron Wilson

*Director
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 in Inman, has long been an advocate of rural Kansas.

idea for a special type of gathering. It wasn't a conference or a seminar. It came to be called the Big Rural Brainstorm, and it was held in Newton in February 2012.

As articulated by Marci, the goal of the gathering was to "bring together people from every aspect of rural life in order to find common possibilities and create innovative 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 issues from a completely different point of view? What if we all were committed to a "renewed rural" and we amped up our collective energies

and focused on ideas that could result in grassroots action--some by the time we leave? What if the room was full of PowerUps to mix with all those who have been working at this 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 grandfather's conference. It was 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 the Big Rural Brainstorm. They came from Kansas communities large and small. People even came from communities as small as Ols-

burg, population 189; Morrowville, population 164; and Morland, population 159 people. Now, that's rural.

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 and small.

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,

linking inventors and investors, 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 floats.

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 as well.

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 sampling of those actions included starting a community garden and

community foundation, developing a rural entertainment network and internship programs for businesses, and doing an inventory of PowerUps.

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 PowerUps? We'll learn the answer to that question next week.

Internship applications now being accepted for fall

The office of Congressman Tim Huelskamp is now accepting applications for the fall 2012 internship program in the Washington, D.C. and Salina, Dodge City and Hutchinson offices.

recent graduates who want to learn firsthand how Congress operates and how federal legislation affects Kansas to apply," Congressman Huelskamp said. "This is a unique experience in which to obtain greater understanding of the legislative

process and constituent services."

Interns may be asked to complete a variety of tasks, including day-to-day office work such as answering phone, writing letters and assisting with media clips. In Addition, interns may be assigned to assist

with constituent casework or attend Congressman Huelskamp's public events through out the First District.

Students will be give flexible

hours to accommodate their course schedules, but hours in the Kansas offices generally run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is an unpaid internship.

Additional information about

the internship program and the application form can be found at huelskamp.house.gov/internships.

**Re-elect
Ward Cassidy
for
120th State Representative**

1st Session accomplishments:
Moved to the most powerful House committee
— Appropriations in 2nd Year
(the farthest west rep. up until Ward's Appointment was from North of Manhattan).

- Only member of his class of 37 new freshmen to have an individual bill passed (helped accountants with hiring practices).
- Led the investigation of the Fire Marshal Department that resulted in revoking illegal citation saving area schools thousands of dollars.
- Making an amendment to the Governor's Tech Ed bill that allowed NW Kansas Technical College to expand.
- In position to be the Education Budget Chair in only his 2nd term.

Ad paid for by Cassidy for Representative, Mike Day Treasurer



**LIKE YOUR BEST
FRIEND, WE ARE
ALWAYS THERE
FOR YOU.**

**SIT BACK AND
ENJOY YOUR
COMMUNITY
NEWSPAPER.**

The Goodland Star-News
1205 Main, Goodland • (785) 899-2338

Reader Recipes

Chess Squares

Ingredients

- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 3 eggs
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, melted
- 4 cups powdered sugar

Directions:

Preheat oven to 300° and spray a 9x13 dish with cooking spray. Mix cake mix, melted butter and one egg to a soft dough. Press into bottom of pan.

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

Bake at 300° for 40-50 minutes until top is golden brown.

This ad is sponsored by:
Designs Unlimited, LLC

1012 Main Avenue, Goodland, KS • Phone: (785) 890-7673

Classifieds work! 899-2338



2012 Fair Special

1 year subscription only \$70!

Valid through August 10, 2012

The Goodland Star-News

1205 Main Street • (785) 899-2338


VOTE TUESDAY, AUGUST 7TH

John Miller

A leader for our future

Now, more than ever, we need a proven leader representing us in the Kansas Senate – a leader who will look out for the best interests of Northwest Kansas, stand up for our schools, and focus on the revitalization of our region's economy.

John Miller is a trusted leader. As a lifelong resident of Northwest Kansas and a grandfather, John understands what matters most for our future. As a farmer and small business owner, John doesn't shy away from hard work. **John is ready to roll up sleeves and find common-sense solutions for us in the State Senate,** just like he's done as a county commissioner. In fact, while serving on the Norton County Commission, John worked successfully to build cost-saving partnerships to **improve rural access to healthcare** and he helped keep the county's **property taxes lowest in the region.**



K-12 SCHOOLS
HIGHER EDUCATION
RURAL REVITALIZATION
RURAL HEALTHCARE
GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

We need someone working for us!
VOTE JOHN MILLER

John Miller

*** KANSAS SENATE

ADV PAID FOR BY KANSAS TRADITIONAL REPUBLICAN MAJORITY PAC, ANDY WOLLEN, TREASURER

Republican • Lifelong NW Kansan • Pro-life

Want an inexpensive way to put your Help Wanted ad in front of 54,000 people?

We Have Jobs

A special promotion of the *Goodland Star-News*

We want to help Sherman County businesses fill their open positions, so we're running a special Help Wanted page in the *Star-News* and the *County Advocate*.

It's more than an ordinary Help Wanted ad!

- Promote your job opening to 1,700 *Goodland Star-News* subscribers.
- Reach more than 54,000 people across northwest Kansas, southwest Nebraska and western Colorado with the *County Advocate*.

Call us at
(785) 899-2338