



Experts focus on how to attract jobs to area

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
sdecamp@nwkansan.com

Three speakers made key points during a community meeting at The Gateway, focusing on three ways to improve Decatur County's current economy: private lending, taking advantage of a coming boom in the meat industry, and working with site selectors who can bring in outside businesses.

The director of the Norton City/County Economic Development Department, Scott Sproul, emphasized the need for banks and private lenders to invest in their community.

One point he made is that banks, in particular, need to be willing to invest in new projects in the county. If people who want to set up, expand or bring in a new business have a clear strategic plan, he said, our banks need to be willing to make loans.

Norton County, he said, has five revolving loan funds available for businesses. If a bank, for example, can loan someone 70 percent, then with these loans, the development department can come in with another 10 percent to help make the deal happen. These revolving loan funds, he said, make low-interest, sometimes no-interest loans.

"But we don't want to give away the farm," Mr. Sproul said. "We need a return on it."

Investing at home can be critical, he said, whether it's a bank, the development agency, a private loan or just spending your money in town. If Decatur County wants to attract new outside businesses, we need to show that as a community, we're willing to invest in ourselves, so that prospects don't go down the road to the next town or state.

Mr. Sproul wrapped up his talk by restating that with goals, strategic planning and following through, our town and county can get back on the upward bounce like Norton has. He encouraged people to visit

the Norton Economic Development website, and to form public-private partnerships that can invest in the community as a whole.

"We can do it," he said, "if the investor and the community are willing. Having that partnership ... no matter how small, shows that you're ready to invest in the community and get the push for more funding."

J.J. Jones, marketing and trade director for the state Department of Agriculture, echoed those words when he spoke of a coming increase in demand for meats and plant-based oils. The world demand for these items, he stressed, will increase with the economic growth of countries like Brazil, India and China.

"The world follows a strict protein pattern," Mr. Jones explained. "We're members of a global society now ... and what we see is something we call a protein curve."

People in developing countries, he said, eat mostly plant-based food. But as they start to make more money and grow, they gradually start to add in plant-based oils, too, and then plant-based proteins, like tofu and lentils. After that comes poultry and seafood, then pork, and finally, on achieving "first-world" status, people start eating beef.

In the last 19 years, he added, China has increased its consumption of soybean oil 30 times over, both for their own use and as a key part of their animal nutrition. And that means that more than likely, China is going to start wanting more beef soon. Because they have been on a steady upward trend in this consumption, Mr. Jones said, it's fair to assume that there will be a "protein gap" coming soon — a period where demand will exceed supply.

"We will have to produce more meat and poultry than we ever have in history," he said, "and (rural) Kansas is in an optimal position to fill that gap."

Lastly, Dan Steffen, a regional

project manager from the state Department of Commerce, said businesses that are looking to move to a place like Decatur County are no longer hard to find. Today, they employ "site selectors," consultants who research what the companies are looking for and then try to find them the best places to go.

"Everyone in the community is (involved in) a recruitment effort," said Mr. Steffen. "We need to talk the town up to outsiders, like the travel and tourism industries do. What we have may be exactly what they're looking for."

The site selectors, he said, know what they're looking for, and save everyone involved time and money by learning about the must-haves and deal-breakers that both the companies they represent and the communities they work with have, said Mr. Steffen. They work with every kind of industry, and the department can help towns like ours go through mock site visits to prepare for them.

The selectors and the businesses they represent, he said, value confidentiality more than anything, and will only work through people who can keep a secret. It's vital that those involved in the deals then keep those secrets, because otherwise the businesses may go somewhere else, he said.

Mr. Steffen said that we, as a county, have to recognize what is feasible to offer outside companies. If a company is going to move here, and needs 100 men to build its buildings, he said, we'd better be able to immediately fill those positions, or else the company might walk. It's important, he said, that we know what we can and can't do. It's equally important to learn exactly what these prospective business people, executives and their workers are looking for when they come calling.

Governor wants the state to compete for jobs, people

When Jeff Colyer and I took office in January of 2011, tens of thousands fewer Kansans were working in private sector jobs than a decade ago.

Our state was losing residents to all surrounding states. We had the highest taxes in the region and ranked among the worst in private-sector job creation. Something had to be done if Kansas was going to be a place where our children and grandchildren could stay to find a job and raise a family.

When we took office, there was \$876 in the state's coffers and a projected deficit for the next fiscal year of \$500 million. Through a combination of fiscal restraint, smart cuts and focusing our resources on the core functions of government, we took that half-billion-dollar deficit and turned it into a half-billion surplus — in one year.

Now that Kansas's economy is getting back on track, and we've taken the necessary steps to get the government's fiscal house in order, it was time to take a stand for the future of our state. In May, the Kansas Legislature passed and I signed the largest tax cut in state history, eliminating state income taxes on small businesses and reducing the tax burden on every hardworking Kansan.

From day one, my administration's top priority has been to grow the Kansas economy and create jobs. We had to reverse the trend of capital loss that we were suffering to every state around us and still the tide of rural population decline. This is what we ran for office promising to do, and we have taken swift and decisive action.



From Cedar Crest
By Gov. Sam Brownback

We did this because it was time to shake up the status quo of taxing, spending and declining. In our federalist system, state governments are forced to compete against each other for capital, jobs and residents. Competition offers two options: you can either refuse to adapt and fall behind those who do, or you can lead the way to the future. Kansas had to change the way it competes regionally and nationally for residents and jobs, and so far we have made great progress.

In addition to reducing the tax burden on Kansas families and small businesses, we improved our economic development toolbox with targeted incentives like letting businesses of any size deduct 100 percent of the expense of new equipment and machinery. We created Rural Opportunity Zones to help recruit people to counties with sharply declining populations. And we established education programs to increase engineering and tech career students to meet future workforce needs.

Our new pro-growth tax policy will be like a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy. It will pave the way to the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs, bring tens of thousands of people to Kan-

sas and help make our state the best place in America to start and grow a small business. It will leave more than a billion dollars in the hands of Kansans — who know far better how to spend their money than the state. An expanding economy and growing population will directly benefit our schools and local governments.

We will continue to work to provide a business environment that will keep our state competitive. We will continue to reform state government so that it is more efficient, effective and responsive to our citizen's needs. We will continue to meet the needs of our state's most vulnerable residents. And we will continue to provide for high-quality schools.

But most of all, we will continue to strive to make our state even better. Kansas' lost decade is over. No longer will we be satisfied with our children moving to another state for better opportunities. No longer will we accept having the highest tax burden in the region. Now is the time to grow our economy, not state government, and that's what our policies will do.

We are just getting started in Kansas, but we are off the sidelines and in the game.

'Nutrition nannies' take over school lunchrooms

Our commander-in-chief and agriculture secretary are apparently moonlighting as Nutrition Nannies.

From our farms to our businesses to our doctors' offices, one would think that the Obama Administration should have run out of places to invade.

But, as school children and their parents learned as the kids headed



On the Potomac
By Rep. Tim Huelskamp
tim.huelskamp@mail.house.gov

back to the classrooms this fall, the administration has found one more place over which to exercise domination: the school cafeteria.

In the final weeks of 2010, as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi prepared to pass the gavel to Republicans, House Democrats got a bill to President Obama's desk that empowered the U.S. Department of Agriculture to completely re-write school lunch standards.

With a title like "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act," one would think such a law would have a goal of making sure kids have full stomachs.

But, as school administrators and cooks, students, and parents have told me, the department's rules that resulted from this "Hunger-Free Act" are having the opposite effect.

Calorie limits are leaving student-athletes under-nourished ahead of intense practices. Three hours of practice after a 750-850 calorie lunch with limited protein at noon?

An emphasis on what goes on the plate — rather than into the body — has only increased the amount of food that goes into the trash can.

And, now that kids are not getting the food they need and want, many are going off campus for even less healthy alternatives, fast food or convenience-store fare, undermining altogether the whole purpose of the school lunch program.

The last Congress was wrong to pass the law that led to these new regulations. But, the current Congress can make it right by exercising our oversight function. Earlier this month, my colleague Steve King and I introduced the "No Hungry Kids Act" to repeal these school-lunch guidelines.

In the same way that one-size-fits-all does not work for what we teach in our classrooms, this leg-

islation recognizes that no single set of cafeteria standards should apply to every single school across the nation — let alone every single student. By lifting the calorie caps and protecting the rights of parents to make decisions for their children, our bill will ensure that children get the food they need in order to stay alert in the classroom and healthy on the athletic fields.

The school-lunch program was created to combat hunger. That should still be the goal. But, when calories have been curtailed, less appealing food is on the plate and students are filling the cafeteria trash cans rather than their stomachs, the goal of overcoming hunger and obesity is defeated.

To learn more about the "No Hungry Kids Act" and to share your own family's experiences with the school lunch program, go to the website www.facebook.com/nutritionnannies.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp, a Fowler Republican, represents the 1st District of Kansas. He serves on the House Agriculture, Budget, and Veterans' Affairs committees.

Cable company gets award

Eagle Communications of Hays, the cable provider in Oberlin, has been recognized as the 2013 Employee Stock Ownership Plan Company of the Year by the Heart of America ESOP Association, an award given each year to a firm that exemplifies employee stock ownership.

"We are honored to have received this award and to join the companies that have laid the foundation for

what it means to be Company of the Year," said Eagle President Gary Shorman. "We were recognized for our internal and external promotion, the various ways we educate, share and participate in the plan throughout the year and our continuous involvement to stay connected in the communities we serve."

"This plan is better than just being a part of a team. It is being a part of a team that shares in the long-term growth and prosperity of a company. We have to work smart, hard and fast, but the rewards of ownership are great. Having ownership in our company is the foundation for quality products and great customer service."

An employee stock ownership plan is designed so that each eligible employee shares in ownership of their company. Each year, Eagle allocates part of its profits to the

employee owners, similar to a profit-sharing plan.

"For Eagle employees, this translates into owning a piece of the company as stock is transferred to each eligible employee in the program," said Shorman. "Our company is valued each year based on our performance, and since the inception of the ESOP, the value of Eagle's stock has steadily increased."

Eagle, with over 250 employee-owners, operates 28 radio stations in Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri and cable systems in 30 Kansas and Colorado towns. The firm also offers e-business solutions, web hosting, telephone service and high-speed and wireless Internet. For information, go to www.eaglecom.net.

In this area, it has cable systems in Bird City, Goodland, Hays, Hoxie, McDonald, Oberlin, St. Francis and Wray, Colo.

In the U.S.A.

"The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil Constitution, are worth defending at all hazards; and it is our duty to defend them against all attacks. We have received them as a fair inheritance from our worthy ancestors: they purchased them for us with toil and danger and expense of treasure and blood, and transmitted them to us with care and diligence. It will bring an everlasting mark of infamy on the present generation, enlightened as it is, if we should suffer them to be wrested from us by violence without a struggle, or to be cheated out of them by the artifices of false and designing men."
 — Samuel Adams, patriot

D&R PUMP SERVICE, LLC
 Domestic, Stock, Windmill,
 Solar, Submersible, Irrigation,
 Repair and Sales.
 With over 30 years of experience!

Ron Shipley - (785) 675-1422
 Devan Castle (785) 657-7217

Mona's Market
in Dresden is now open!
 We have mums, cool gourds, tulip bulbs, perennials, shrubs, trees, tomatoes.
 Hours are 9-5:30 Monday through Saturday. Come see us where we have "every blooming thing under the sun"

Oncology Services
Providing leading edge chemotherapy, close to home.

L to R: Cheri, RN; Theresa, RN; Misti, RN, Director of Nursing; Lisa, RN; Penny, RN

Our friendly, certified chemotherapy nurses and pharmacists work closely with the Callahan Cancer Center in North Platte, and visiting oncologists, Dr. Maria DeVilla and Dr. Ahmed Awais. Our beautiful new Oncology Services suite offers plenty of comfortable space for infusions, and will soon offer an area dedicated solely to chemotherapy treatments.

Chemotherapy treatments from people who care is one more way we make sure advanced care is always available for you and your loved ones.

Great Plains
 Regional Medical Center
 Callahan Cancer Center

COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
Advanced care. Always there.

1301 East H Street • McCook • 308-344-2650 • www.chmccook.org
 This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.