

## MULTI- COUNTY PARTNERSHIP

**Furnas/Harlan Partnership** is an economic development partnership, working to ensure the future of our region. The Partnership is striving to build a unified vision for economic development in Furnas & Harlan counties.

Furnas/Harlan Partnership started as a vision of the Manager and Board of Directors of Twin Valleys Public Power District in Cambridge joined by the Southwest Nebraska RC&D in Cambridge and Trail Blazers RC&D in Red Cloud as well as the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Inter-local Agreements were signed in December 2003 by 12 public entities in the two counties. The group contracted with a part-time coordinator/director in October 2005.



*Interlocal agreement signing, with members of the local governmental entities and Lt. Gov Dave Heineman (2<sup>nd</sup> from right front.)*

Community Assistance is provided by connecting people and communities with the information and resources needed to make a project come together. Community/Regional Educational programs have been developed through grant funds including the Building Entrepreneurial Communities program administered by the Nebraska Rural Development Commission. The Partnership sponsored classes to assist with learning computer technology, website development, business transition, leadership development and Red Carpet Service Training, as well as partnering with an EDGE (Enhancing, Growing, Developing, Entrepreneurs) coalition, thus providing opportunities for entrepreneurs to learn how to write a Business Plan. Many of the classes were brought about by collaborating with the University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension Educators.



*2nd Leading Locally Class 2008-2009, where people from six communities came together to learn and network.*

Republican River Valley Community Foundation [501(c)3] was developed by the Furnas/Harlan Partnership in January of 2007 to provide operational funding to the Furnas/Harlan Partnership, Inc. as well as provide support through grant making and community involvement efforts to other qualifying organizations as set forth by the Board of Directors. Individuals and entities can leave permanent legacies through the foundation. Ultimately this will lessen the burden of local government and combat the regional deterioration. The objectives are to work together cooperatively and collaboratively to reverse the trend of out-migration and population decline, increase the number of jobs and the median incomes, improve housing, promote business transition, retention of services, education, quality health care which includes care of the aging population, protection of natural resources, support of alternative agricultural practices that encourage sustainability of family farms, and encourage philanthropy in the local sector through the local retention of wealth transfer.

Regional partnerships are vital to the success of an economic development organization, because we learned that working together increases potential exponentially. In rural Nebraska and rural America, where people are so fiercely independent and isolated, due to geography and population people did learn to band together when disaster struck and neighbors needed help. We as a region can be exceedingly strong if we lose the mentality of isolationism and embrace the attitude of regionalism. The Furnas/Harlan Partnership works with the individual public entities, and the Resource Conservation & Development offices, the South Platte United Chambers of Commerce, Heritage Byway (Highway 136), Grow Nebraska, PK Partnership (EDGE coalition), South Central Economic Development District, NebraskaRuralLiving.com the chickendancetrail.com, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and the USDA Rural Development.

Future Projects include the continued effort of working with each individual community to meet their individual needs and goals.

For more information contact Nebraska Rural Development Commission.