

USDA programs aid rural Iowa

By DARIN LEACH

THE recent report "Made in Rural America" suggests USDA programs add an average of \$4 billion to Iowa's economy yearly to help farmers, support research and build strong communities.

Between 2009 and 2013, USDA invested more than \$20 billion in Iowa to support the farmers who are driving the rural economy forward, build the facilities and businesses to support communities, carry out soil and water conservation, facilitate research, promote new markets for rural products, and provide a safe, affordable and nutritious food supply.

"While the tremendous scope and breadth of USDA's involvement in helping Iowans is impressive, it is sometimes the smallest projects that can make a big difference in the lives of rural Iowans," says Bill Menner, state director for USDA Rural Development in Iowa.

Menner recently visited communities in southwest Iowa that are using USDA Rural Development funds to improve their services to Iowans. His first stop was the opening of the renovated Taylor County Outreach Center in Bedford. The center, which was once a small Hy-Vee grocery store, is operated by MATURA, a community action agency for Madison, Adams, Taylor, Union, Ringgold and Adair counties.

MATURA used a \$4,500 Rural Development grant to help buy appliances for the educational and teaching kitchen that has



COMMUNITY KITCHEN: The renovated Taylor County Outreach Center in Bedford had a grand opening to showcase the new educational and teaching kitchen. The kitchen, used to teach community members about ways to prepare locally grown foods, was made possible through a \$4,500 USDA grant.

been added to the facility to create a space where Taylor County residents can learn to prepare locally grown foods, and do it in a way that is healthy and nutritional.

For years resident Lydia Brumfield worked to transform the empty grocery store into something that would benefit the community. Today, the outreach center also has a Goodwill-like salesroom where donated goods are resold, a small food bank, and office space for helping residents fill out paperwork for programs like energy assistance and job training.

Brumfield is working with the local Hy-Vee dietitian on programs at the center

and has reached out to staff with Iowa State University Extension, the school district and other organizations to further test her idea for a community cooking and nutrition hub. Brumfield notes everyone's response has been positive.

"This approach to promoting new ways to cook with healthy ingredients can make a real difference in the lives of residents MATURA serves," Menner notes. This community action partnership is impacting the lives of hundreds of residents from Bedford, Blockton, Clearfield, Conway, Gravity, Lenox, New Market, Sharpsburg and other communities.

Providing needed services

Menner also visited Corning in nearby Adams County where he met with staff at Midwest Opportunities Inc. This local organization recently received USDA Rural Development economic impact initiative grants totaling \$80,000. They are using the funding to help buy a wheelchair-accessible van to assist with transporting clients, as well as replace siding, doors and windows at two residential homes.

Before leaving Corning, Menner toured the replacement fire station under construction. The city of Corning is using \$1 million in USDA Rural Development funding to assist with construction of a new fire station. The larger fire station will have storage for multiple vehicles, gear and other equipment, a training room, kitchen area, and office space.

Menner concluded his day in southern Iowa with a visit to the John Wayne Birthplace Museum in Winterset. Farmers Electric Cooperative Inc. in Greenfield recently received a \$200,000 grant from Rural Development. The electric cooperative is loaning the money to the John Wayne Birthplace Society to help build a new museum expected to open in spring. Also, the museum received a \$10,000 USDA grant to purchase a display case and other equipment for the new building.

Here are some other southern Iowa communities that received funding assistance from USDA Rural Development in 2014. The grants are helping improve vital public safety and community services provided in rural parts of the state.

■ **Alegent Health Mercy Hospital, Corning** — \$50,000 grant to construct a garage at the hospital

■ **City of Albia** — \$27,200 grant to buy a new police vehicle and a \$33,700 grant to make repairs to a building where city-owned childcare operates including new roof, windows and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system

■ **City of Cincinnati** — \$50,000 to buy a fire truck and related equipment

■ **Community Hospital at Hamburg** — \$49,000 for medical equipment

■ **City of Corydon** — \$31,100 to buy a new police vehicle and a \$34,200 to buy 25 sets of turnout gear for fire department

■ **City of Floris** — \$50,000 for 20 sets of turnout gear for fire department

■ **City of Hamburg** — \$28,000 to buy utility service vehicle, mowers and a utility locating device

■ **City of Moulton** — \$50,000 grant for a fire truck and equipment and a \$50,000 grant to buy an ambulance and equipment

■ **City of Persia** — \$50,000 for fire truck

■ **Wayne County** — \$18,700 for a van to be used by a mental health facility

This past year USDA Rural Development's investment in Iowa helped create or retain more than 1,000 jobs, aided 2,600 families in buying their own homes and assisted more than 60 communities as they made improvements to their facilities, services and infrastructure. For more on USDA Rural Development's loan and grant programs call 515-284-4663 or visit rurdev.usda.gov/ia.

Leach is public information coordinator with USDA Rural Development.



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NEW MUSEUM: A new John Wayne Birthplace Museum in Winterset will be opening soon, thanks to USDA Rural Development funding. USDA awarded a \$200,000 rural economic development grant to Farmers Electric Cooperative of Greenfield. The co-op, in turn, loaned the money to the John Wayne Birthplace Society to assist with some of the construction cost.