

ANNUAL REPORT

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

*Serving the People of Kandiyohi, McLeod,
Meeker and Renville Counties
Since 1974*



Calendar Year 2003

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MID-MINNESOTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Serving the People of Region Six East

To Commissioners and Other Involved Parties,

We are pleased to provide you with the 2003 Annual Report of the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC). This report describes achievements of the Commission and its staff in carrying out the Commission's mission. The report highlights the programs and projects of the MMDC during Calendar Year 2003. The enclosed year-end financial data is for Fiscal Year 2003 (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003). The following is MMDC's mission statement:

We will administer state and federal programs, coordinate multi-jurisdictional activities, and provide technical assistance to government, businesses, and local organizations to maintain or enhance the quality of life in the Counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker and Renville.

One continuing project that has seen its ups and downs over the course of the year has been working with the Regional Development Commissions in Regions 6W, 8 and 9 in developing plans to partner in carrying out the activities of each of our Area Agencies on Aging. The Minnesota Board on Aging has asked AAAs in the State to form such alliances to create larger and fewer service areas. Through many hours of meeting together, a very good and equitable plan is in the final stages of being developed. It has been a challenge to meet the needs and desires of all four Commissions in this planning process. Early in 2004, the planning for the partnership will be finalized and implementation steps will begin. Although it is unlikely that the partnership will see cost savings, it will provide more opportunity for program development and coordination activities and the ability to specialize tasks. This should result in better service to our Region's elderly population.

The Building Inspections Department continued its steady growth in 2003 with several more jurisdictions being added to the list of clients for the administration of the State Building Code. The result of the growth will be the hire of another state certified building official in early 2004. When looking at the number of jurisdictions that contract with MMDC for this service, the Commission is now one of the largest providers of this service in the State. During the past year, the department developed a process that is being utilized in each one of the jurisdictions to standardize fees and paperwork to make the program run very smoothly throughout the communities we serve.

MMDC has also been involved in the State's new Job Opportunity Building Zone (JOBZ) initiative. To help ensure that the Region's communities had an opportunity to participate in the program, the Commission partnered with the Southwest Minnesota RDC in submitting a joint application. Through a lot of work by the interested communities, county economic development professionals and both regions, the JOBZ application was one of the ten approved within the State. The program will be implemented in the early months of 2004.

Unfortunately another major event of the year was the tornado that caused great harm to the City of Buffalo Lake. One of the articles in this report discusses the recovery efforts that have taken place with MMDC assistance since the storm hit the community on June 25, 2003. It has been inspirational to see how the community has been able to work together, along with help and donations from the surrounding area to recover from this disaster. MMDC staff continues to work with the city on the continuing efforts to bring the community's commercial businesses back into business once again.

Overall, we are extremely proud of each of MMDC's Departments in providing much needed service throughout the region in 2003. With the numerous and wide array of services and accomplishments during the course of the year, the MMDC is continuing to have a tangible, positive impact on those we serve. We thank MMDC's Board of Commissioners and staff who have all shown considerable commitment and hard work throughout the course of the year. We also wish to thank our network of strategic partners in both the public and private sector on working together with the Commission in meeting the demands of the Region today and into the future.

Respectfully yours,

DuWayne Underthun
Chairperson

Donn Winckler
Executive Director

Buffalo Lake Tornado Recovery Assistance

In the early evening hours of June 25, 2003, a tornado classified as a "F2" tornado (wind speeds of 113 to 157 mph) passed through the City of Buffalo Lake. The tornado touched down six miles to the south of the city, moving straight north ending up in the city. At its widest point, it was a half-mile wide. The storm left major damage to numerous homes and to the central business district, but luckily there were no fatalities and only minor injuries.

MMDC was just one of many organizations and individuals who volunteered assistance to Buffalo Lake's recovery. The morning after the tornado, MMDC building inspection staff, along with officials from other parts of Southwest Minnesota, began to provide damage assessments to all buildings in the city. The Commission, through a request from the city, prepared and tabulated a survey of households to learn, among other things, the financial need of the city's residents as a result of the tornado.

Earlier in the year, Renville County was the recipient of a Small Cities Development Program grant in the amount of \$375,000. Through an agreement of the county and State

officials, the grant money was redirected to the City of Buffalo Lake for recovery efforts. The MMDC and the Renville County EDA/HRA assisted the community in forming a Tornado Recovery Task Force, which led to the reincarnation of the Buffalo Lake Economic Development Authority.

The Commission was asked to be the grant administrator for the grant project. Policy and procedures for the fund's use were developed. The Recovery Task Force's main objective was to reestablish the city's grocery store that was so heavily damaged by the tornado that it was found to be structurally unsound. The former owner decided he did not want to reopen the store. New ownership for a grocery store has been developed, and the old structure will be razed. Buffalo Lake will soon have a new grocery store, which is a critical need for this community. A couple other businesses that received significant tornado damage are also receiving grant assistance to restart their businesses.

Grant Administration Services

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission has successfully administered a number of Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) grants through the years. In Calendar Year 2003, there were five SCDP projects that were all in different stages of completion. These projects were for the Cities of Cosmos, Sacred Heart, Stewart, Renville and Buffalo Lake. Funding for the program comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is administered at the State level by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

The Cities of Grove City, Cosmos, Sacred Heart and Renville all have received SCDP funds for providing housing rehabilitation to low and moderate income households. The Cities of Stewart and Buffalo Lake have received SCDP funds for both housing rehabilitation and public facilities improvements. In addition to Buffalo Lake's own SCDP grant program, the MMDC is also

assisting Renville County with administering SCDP funds that are going to assist commercial businesses with tornado recovery efforts in the community.

The MMDC provides this SCDP grant administration service to provide funded communities with experienced grant administrators and rehabilitation specialists. The contracted assistance relieves the local units of government of the staggering amount of required paperwork. The MMDC has three persons who are State Certified Building Officials and are trained in the necessary rehabilitation standards that are used for the program. Other MMDC personnel are involved in the financial and project administration of the program.

For more information on Grant Administration Services, call 320-235-8504, Ext. 25.

State Certified Building Inspection Services

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) has three fully certified State Building Officials on its staff who provide inspection and plan review services for communities that have adopted the State Building Code.

The Commission will hire another full-time Building Official in early 2004 to meet the demand of the growing number of jurisdictions served. The Commission's Economic Development Director is also fully licensed as Certified Building Official which gives the department the added ability to use his assistance on occasions when work gets very busy. The State Building Code sets construction standards to assure the health, safety, comfort and security of building occupants.

MMDC has ongoing contracts with 19 local units of government in providing this service. The jurisdictions MMDC serves are as follows: in Kandiyohi County: Atwater, Blomkest, Dovre Township, Kandiyohi, New London, Pennock, and Spicer; in McLeod County: Brownton and Stewart; in Meeker County: Cosmos, Darwin, Dassel and Grove City; in Renville County: Bird Island and Fairfax; in Wright County: Cokato and Stockholm Township; in Stearns County: Paynesville with the City of Richmond soon to be added. Once Richmond is added, the combined population for these jurisdictions served will be close to 21,000 persons. Additional inspections are being made in the communities of Buffalo Lake, Sacred Heart, Hector and Lake Lillian under the State Hazardous Building Act. Staff also provides accessibility inspections on occasion for Renville County.

Department staff have received training and provided service with lead-based paint inspections and risk assessments. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations require these inspections in housing projects that they participate in. As few persons have both the training and equipment to provide this service in Southwest Minnesota, MMDC provides this service within as well as outside of our four county Region. Analysis of asbestos concerns is another service the Department offers. Lastly, the Building Officials provide

housing rehabilitation inspection services for both the Hutchinson and Willmar HRAs.

Administering the Minnesota State Building Code involves the following activities:

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission Building Department staff currently provide building code enforcement to 19 local units of government in six counties. The Commission is one of the largest code enforcement agencies in outstate Minnesota.

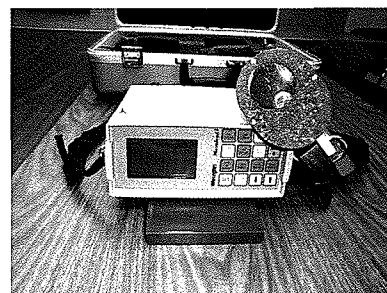
- Responding to questions, concerns, and other inquiries about building code requirements.
- Issuing permits, collecting fees, answering inquiries about particular projects, and related activities.
- Checking the building plans for compliance with applicable requirements of the Building Code.
- Carrying out the field inspections for each building project. The number of field inspections varies from a couple of field inspections to many, depending on the project. Most of the building inspectors' time is devoted to

this activity. Associated activities

include notifying builders of problems, arranging for corrective measures, and so on.

- Enforcement activities related to building without required permits and issues that arise when permits are not complied with.
- Preparing reports required as part of the Building Code.

For more information on Building Inspection Services, call 320-235-8504, Ext. 22.



MMDC's XRF machine which is used for lead-based paint assessments.

Current Commission Members

Kandiyohi County Representatives

DuWayne Underthun, Chairperson	Townships
Dennis Peterson	County
Les Heitke	City of Willmar
Gene Anderson	Municipalities

Meeker County Representatives

Archie Peters	Townships
Vernon Madson	Municipalities
Ron Kutzke	County
Sherron Reilly	Public Interest
Richard Brooks, Vice-Chairperson	Public Interest
Dorothy Lindstrom, Treasurer	Public Interest

McLeod County Representatives

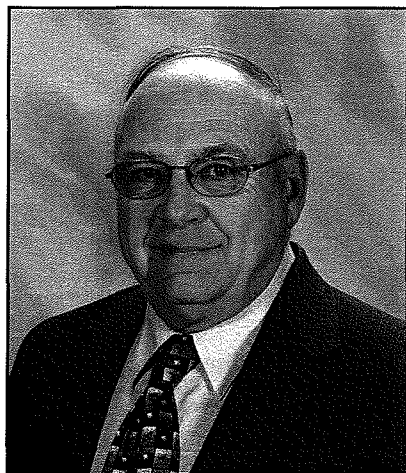
Roger Schmidt	Townships
Charles Warner	Municipalities
Sheldon Nies	County
Bill Arndt	City of Hutchinson

Renville County Representatives

Delbert Wetzel	Townships
Ronald Degner, Secretary	Municipalities
John Stahl	County
Richard Loftness	Public Interest
James Schafer	Public Interest
Francis Schweiss	Public Interest

Current Staff

Executive Director	Donn Winckler	Economic Development Director	Les Nelson
Office Manager	Kristen Rosenboom	Community Development Director	Matthew E. Johnson
Financial Director	Sue Gimse	Community Devel. Planner	Michael Sharp
Aging Program Director	Kate Selseth	SCDP Grants Administrator/Building	
Aging Program Specialist	Taryn Sietsema	Inspector	Bernard F. "Butch" Schulte
		Building Inspector	Jim Solheid



DuWayne Underthun
Chairperson



Donn Winckler
Executive Director

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY FISCAL YEAR 2003

REVENUES

FEDERAL		\$ 1,880,326
Economic Development Administration	\$ 56,891	
HHS - Area Agency on Aging	637,839	
Dept. of Employment & Economic Development	1,185,596	
STATE		\$ 188,128
Agricultural Credit	\$ 25,544	
PERA Aid	2,101	
Department of Transportation	50,000	
State Nutrition	96,550	
State SOS	13,933	
LOCAL		\$ 551,562
Property Taxes	\$ 191,303	
Interest Earnings	11,437	
Inkind	2,533	
Building Inspections	151,774	
Revolving Loan Fund - Administration	30,000	
Small Cities Repayment Monies	28,995	
Technical Assistance Contracts/Miscellaneous	135,520	
TOTAL REVENUES		\$2,620,016

EXPENDITURES

PERSONAL SERVICES	\$ 559,967
SUPPLIES & PRINTING	29,909
OTHER SERVICES: Communication, Postage, Conference, Subscriptions	31,734
OTHER CHARGES: Rent, Insurance, Professional Services	51,290
CAPITAL OUTLAY	1,280
TRAVEL: Staff and Advisory Committees	49,894
COMMISSION: Travel and Per Diem	15,076
DIRECT CONTRACTS	1,836,174
OTHER USES	7,376
IN-KIND SERVICES	2,533
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 2,585,233

PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY FISCAL YEAR 2004

REVENUES

FEDERAL		\$1,063,176
Economic Development Administration	\$ 53,000	
HHS - Area Agency on Aging	688,686	
Dept. of Employment & Economic Development	321,490	
STATE		\$ 174,195
Agricultural Credit	\$ 25,544	
PERA Aid	2,101	
Department of Transportation	50,000	
State Nutrition	96,550	
LOCAL		\$ 610,037
Property Taxes	\$ 191,943	
Interest Earnings	10,000	
Inkind	2,071	
Building Inspections	218,710	
Revolving Loan Fund - Administration	32,136	
Technical Assistance Contracts/Misc.	139,177	
Equipment Usage	16,000	
TOTAL REVENUES		\$1,847,408

EXPENDITURES

PERSONAL SERVICES	\$ 577,411
SUPPLIES & PRINTING	26,973
OTHER SERVICES: Communication, Postage, Conference, Subscriptions	31,948
OTHER CHARGES: Rent, Insurance, Professional Services	58,034
CAPITAL OUTLAY	9,000
TRAVEL: Staff and Advisory Committees	50,750
COMMISSION: Travel and Per Diem	11,140
DIRECT CONTRACTS	990,271
OTHER USES	6,094
IN-KIND SERVICES	2,071
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$1,763,692

Economic Development Assistance and Revolving Loan Fund

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission's economic development program is designed to assist local units of government and business in the Region with activities that create or support the creation of jobs and investment. Program activities are funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and the local tax levy. The Commission operates a \$1.4 million Revolving Loan Fund program within the Region's four counties. Two separate advisory committees assist the Commission with the economic development activities. The first committee provides recommendations to the Commission on the priorities and goals of economic development in the Region. The second advisory committee provides review and recommendations on the Commission's Revolving Loan Fund program.

A major portion of the staff time in economic development is devoted to technical assistance and administering the Revolving Loan Fund. Businesses, individuals and governmental units can request and receive economic development technical assistance. Requests range from business assistance information to business finance analysis, infrastructure improvements, tax increment financing and grant and loan writing.

The Revolving Loan Fund was established to assist businesses within the Region with gap financing. Businesses must be deemed viable and involve job creation or retention. Loans are made for working capital, land, buildings and equipment. The amounts given out as loans range from \$5,000 to a maximum of \$100,000. The Revolving Loan Fund was originally capitalized primarily through Economic Development Administration funds, but also from funds from the four counties, the State of Minnesota, the Southwest Minnesota Foundation and from the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission.

Economic development activities during the past fiscal year include:

- Continued to serve as the fiscal agent and provided technical assistance to the West Central Growth Alliance.
- Authored annual update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as required by the EDA planning grant.
- Received invitation and authored Economic Development Planning Grant Application. The application was approved and funded.

- Attended National EDA Conference to be updated on current economic development tools and projects as well as changes at the Federal level.
- Co-sponsored an "Economic Watershed Summit" along with the Department of Economic Security which addressed workforce development and other development issues.
- Co-author and administration of State of Minnesota Job Opportunity Building Zone application for southwest Minnesota.
- Assisted the City of Litchfield with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of the City's amenities, infrastructure and needs assessment.
- Provided assistance to the City of Buffalo Lake regarding its tornado recovery efforts and its use of State-provided grant funds to rehabilitate.
- Provided a training session for the Atwater Economic Development Authority on types of business subsidy.
- Provided technical assistance to the Minnesota Central Rail Line Corridor Study.
- Served as co-chairperson of the Kandiyohi County Entrepreneurs Revolving Loan Fund.
- Participated in a Business Capital Seminar for Renville County.
- Authored "Waste to Watts" proposal to the Southwest Minnesota Foundation.
- Assisted with "The Gathering" conference at Ridgewater College.
- Served on the Ridgewater College Small Business Management Advisory Committee.

For more information on Economic Development Assistance and the Revolving Loan Fund, call 320-235-8504, Ext. 28.

*This Annual Report was printed with
MMDC's new Canon Color Copier.
Full-color copies are available at just
15 cents per page. To use this resource,
please contact Matthew Johnson at
320-235-8504, Ext. 39.*

Community Development and Planning Technical Assistance

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is able to provide a wide array of community development/ planning projects and activities for local units of government. Typically this particular program area is not tied to any State or Federally funded program, but funded through service charges that are subsidized by the use of the Commission's general fund. Consequently, the Commission is free to set its own priorities and objectives in providing technical services where they are most needed by local units of government.

Each year the staff offers assistance to local units of government on a wide range of services. These services include comprehensive land use plans, zoning and subdivision ordinances, ordinance codification, grant and loan writing, community surveys, public facilities planning, housing studies, and mapping projects as well as many other technical services. As one of Minnesota's State Data Centers, the MMDC annually provides businesses, non-profit agencies, private citizens, and units of government data from the Census and other sources.

In 2003, the Commission continued to assist the Region's counties and other local units of government with various important natural resource issues. The Comprehensive Local Water Plans for each of the four counties within the Region had their final revisions made and were approved by the counties and the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources (BSWR). These water plans led to MMDC assisting with other water resource activities during the year. The Commission worked with the Buffalo Creek Watershed District on updating their Overall Plan. Like the County Water Plans, the Overall Plan will guide the District in water resource management for the next ten years. The District has already contacted MMDC to assist them in the implementation of several of the initiatives prescribed in the document.

The Commission's staff also wrote successful grant applications to BSWR for Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties to conduct a drainage system inventory and map. MMDC staff is currently assisting the counties in carrying out these activities.

Another area of natural resource planning that took place during 2003 was assisting Kandiyohi County with a nine-month facilitation effort in working on solutions to the many long-term aggregate mining issues that face the county.

Staff worked with a newly formed County Gravel Task Force in preparing a Final Report to the County Commissioners. In 2002, the Commission assisted Meeker County with a similar aggregate facilitation effort. In addition to the assistance in facilitating this report, MMDC also prepared a "Potential Aggregate Resource Map" for the County.

Other principal accomplishments and activities that have been undertaken by the Community Planning and Development Department over the course of the past calendar year are highlighted below:

- Comprehensive Plans have been completed or are in the process of being completed for the cities of Stewart, Pennock, Plato, Dassel and Lester Prairie.
- Assistance was given to the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission with Comprehensive Plans for Big Stone, Chippewa and Lac Qui Parle Counties.
- Zoning ordinances have been prepared for the Cities of Franklin, Raymond, Lake Lillian and Pennock. Assistance was given to the City of Willmar in preparing a zoning map.
- Ordinance codification projects were completed in the Cities of Franklin, Plato, Pennock and Raymond.
- MMDC facilitated a regional GIS Task Force. A Meeker County GIS Informational Day was organized by MMDC staff.
- A floodplain map was prepared for the City of Grove City.
- Staff assisted Kandiyohi County with a survey that went to 350 minorities and prepared a report on a study to help eliminate health disparities.
- MMDC prepared Hazard Mitigation Plan grant applications for Kandiyohi, Meeker and Renville Counties which will be conducted in 2004.
- The City of Blomkest is being assisted in its efforts in planning and financing a city sewer system.

For more information on Community Development and Planning Technical Assistance services, call 320-235-8504, Ext. 39.

Transportation Planning and Assistance

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) receives an annual grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, matched with the local tax levy, to provide transportation planning services within the Region's four counties and to participate in the Southwest Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) process. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) makes recommendations to the Commission on these transportation activities.

The Commission annually participates in the Area Transportation Partnership's activities of deciding which projects receive Federal funding through the State's Transportation Improvement Program. MMDC's voting members on the ATP are Sheldon Nies and Ron Kutzke. The TAC scores projects to their "regional significance" as part of the ATP's project ranking process. The Commission also holds an annual public informational meeting on the proposed Area Transportation Improvement Program. Staff provides assistance for these activities as well as serving on an ATP Committee that makes Enhancement Project funding recommendations. Executive Director Winckler serves on an ATP committee that has been given the task of working on a new road and bridge project scoring system. The scoring system includes both a "technical score" and a "regional significance" score.

In December of 2003, the City of Plato received an award from the Minnesota Department of Transportation for their recently completed comprehensive plan. The award, which is the first of its kind given out by Mn/DOT, is for the way the plan addresses access to Highway 212 from the city. MMDC staff assisted the city in preparing the plan. As a result, Mn/DOT also awarded MMDC with a leadership award. The plan will assist the city with land use decisions in the future which will preserve needed land for a future bridge over TH 212 at the intersection of CSAH 9.

The transportation component maps the intersection and identifies a number of issues associated with the project, such as interim use permits and pedestrian concerns. In addition to the full intersection, the City has also addressed making roadway/safety improvements along County Road 9.

Staff has worked on assisting the City of New London with a T.H. 23 and T.H. 9 Intersection Official Map. Mn/DOT has interests in acquiring the right-of-way adjacent to this intersection in order to eventually build an overpass once CSAH 40 is realigned sometime in the future. Within the City of Dassel's update to their comprehensive plan, the

intersection between T.H. 12 and T.H. 15 is also a primary area of concern and study. At the end of the calendar year, staff began assisting Kandiyohi County's Highway Department with conducting a roadway jurisdictional study, which systematically examines all roadways in the County to determine which jurisdiction they should be under.

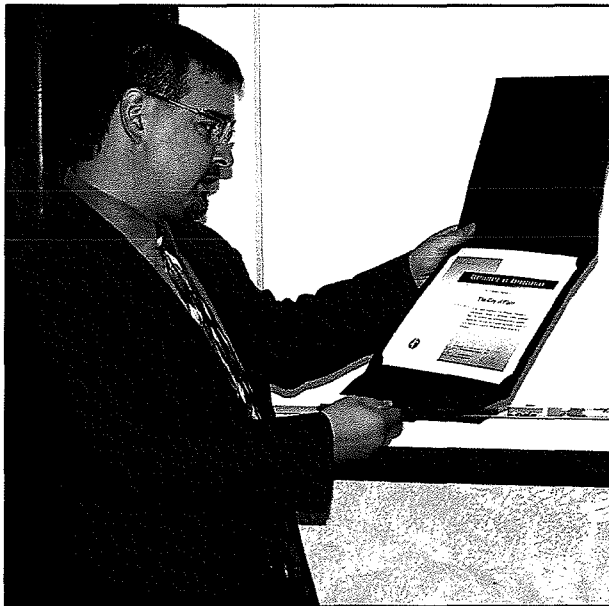
Commission staff was also active in the following transportation activities during FY 2002:

- Staff serve as a member of the KAT Operation Committee.
- The Commission continues to work with MnDOT to process functional classification changes on a case-by-case basis.
- Transportation components and

issues have been included within the comprehensive plans the Community Planning Department has prepared.

- Staff attended RDC Transportation Planners meetings during the past year. These quarterly meetings allow the planners to share information and coordinate planning efforts.
- Staff was the lead planner in this past year's ATP Enhancement Committee project review process. The lead planner is responsible for organizing and distributing materials regarding the meeting of the committee.

For more information on Transportation Planning and Assistance services, call 320-235-8504, Ext. 39.



Community Development Director Matthew Johnson presents the City of Plato with their Mn/DOT award.

Photo courtesy of the McLeod County Chronicle.

MMDC Receives Two National Awards

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission received two National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Innovation Awards in 2003. The NADO Innovation Award Program annually recognizes NADO members for their work in community, economic and human development. The award program began in 1986 with the goal of sharing information about innovative programs and projects in rural America. The two awards MMDC received were part of the 77 Innovation Awards that NADO awarded this past year through an application process.

One of the Innovation Awards was for MMDC's work on four county (Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker and Renville) Comprehensive Local Water Plans. A collaborative was formed between MMDC and the four counties to fulfill each county's eligibility requirements for Natural Resource Block Grant funds from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. The four counties' Joint Powers Board contracted with the Development Commission for a fee to update each county's water plan, addressing such issues as

drainage, shoreland management and groundwater protection. The regional collaboration and MMDC's use of GIS database saved the four counties approximately \$120,000.

The other 2003 NADO Innovation award MMDC received was for its collaboration and partnership between the four southwest Minnesota Regional Development Commissions (RDC) located in Regions 6E, 6W, 8 and 9. Through this partnership, the four RDCs have laid the foundation for mutual assistance and possible joint program administration. Leadership from each region meet regularly to develop areas of cooperation, shared values, policy and program initiatives. Initial efforts have centered on development of a cooperative system for administering local Area Agencies on Aging and the sharing of GIS assets, future activities will explore joint training and expanding service offerings based on regional specializations. All four RDCs jointly applied for and shared this NADO Award.



Community Development Planner Michael Sharp with the award from NADO which recognizes the MMDC's achievements in preparing the four-county water plans.

Area Agency on Aging

The Mid-Minnesota Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is dedicated to helping older people in Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker and Renville Counties lead comfortable, independent lives. The goals of the AAA are to enhance service offerings and ensure that the needs of the senior population are met. The 2003 AAA budget is \$807,532 which provides for program development, senior information and assistance through the Senior LinkAge Line® and health insurance counseling, as well as financial assistance to service providers and senior centers.

Family Caregiver Support

The Older Americans Act was reauthorized in November 1999, which resulted in new federal funding to states for the development of resources for family caregivers. Mid-Minnesota AAA received \$91,553 from the National Caregiver Support Program. The successful bidder for this program was Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Moorhead. LSS hired Jan Novotny from Willmar as the program director for this Region. The focus of the program is to develop support services for caregivers. An example of this support is caregiver support groups and/or workshops.

Long Term Care Activities

The Regional Analysis conducted in December, 2002 identified overall aging population characteristics for the region. In general, it was found that services rated as high priority included transportation, and services that foster independence for persons choosing to remain in their homes. The Regional Analysis activity was mandated by State statute to be conducted in conjunction with County Gaps Analysis identification. Counties and Area Agencies received additional funding to conduct these activities. They are part of the overall goal of the State Long-Term Care Task Force to reconfigure the long term care system in Minnesota. The next scheduled Regional/Gaps Analysis is for 2004.

Other AAA Activities

Staff provide a wide variety of technical assistance to various aging organizations and causes. Some of the activities of the past fiscal year include:

- Conducted a number of Medication Management/Rx Connect presentations.
- Made numerous presentations about AAA services including information on health insurance

counseling topics such as Medicare, the Prescription Drug Program, and the Senior LinkAge Line.

- Participated in the Willmar Life Connections Expo.
- Member of a Cultural Diversity Committee which co-sponsored a Regional Cultural Diversity Conference held in Willmar.
- Participated in the Medicare FYI Robert Wood Johnson Medicare Savings Programs.
- Participated on the Advisory Committee of the West Central Integration Collaborative.
- Co-sponsored the Second Annual Caregiver Event for Willmar held in October 2003.
- Provided technical assistance provided to UMRVDC, January through June, for administrative duties.
- Revised the AAA brochure.

The AAA has an advisory council composed of 11 members chaired by Richard Brooks of rural Darwin. The advisory council meets up to eight times per year and has a primary responsibility of establishing priorities and reviewing and recommending projects for funding. Although priorities and projects change, the following list of priority areas and projects funded during fiscal year 2003 is representative of a typical year:

Transportation: Meeker County, Kandiyohi County and Renville County

Legal Services/Education: Western Minnesota Legal Services

Congregate Dining and Home Delivered Meals: Augustana Homes (28 dining sites and 27 home delivered communities). The meal service contract process was opened for competition in June 2003. Two applicants completed the process. Nutrition Services Inc. was the successful bidder.

Respite Care/Adult Day Services/Living at Home Block Nurse Program: Counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, and Meeker

Senior LinkAge Line®: Mid-Minnesota AAA direct service and Region Eight AAA

Health Insurance Counseling: Mid-Minnesota AAA direct service

(continued on Page 12)

Area Agency on Aging (continued)

EDP—Elder Care Development Partnership, formerly known as SAIL (Seniors Agenda for Independent Living) Mid-Minnesota AAA receives State funds from Region Nine AAA to address housing with services needs in the Region. Mid-Minnesota AAA contracts a portion of the funds to Schneider Consulting Services, Inc. to implement this strategy. Other proceeds are utilized to augment direct services of the AAA Senior Outreach Specialist position.

Collaboration Between Mid-Minnesota and Southwest AAA

The joint Health Insurance Counseling and Senior LinkAge Line® program between Region 6E and Region 6W was in operation from January through September. This program began in Fiscal Year 2001 in order to maximize efficiencies and resources between the two AAAs. However, due to ever changing requirements for information and assistance standards, Mid-Minnesota AAA entered a new phase of maximizing resources and incorporating additional standards to deliver Information and Assistance services. In July, a new staff position was created, i.e. the Senior Outreach Specialist, whose primary function is to interact directly with consumers in the region. The interaction can result from calls through the Senior LinkAge Line®, or direct community referrals through the ongoing community presentations.

Beginning October 1, 2003, Mid-Minnesota AAA, Region Nine AAA, Southwest AAA, and Upper Minnesota Valley AAA began sharing the Information and Assistance direct service activities across the 27-county region. A Senior LinkAge Line® Call Center was established in Slayton. All calls originating in the four region counties are prefix-routed to Slayton. Staff at the Call Center can provide immediate assistance. Any caller requesting additional in-person assistance, including prescription drug assistance, is contacted by the AAA that serves their county. The Minnesota Board on Aging supported the reconfiguration of call centers across the State. There are now six total call centers in operation.

Four Region Collaboration Activities

Plans continued throughout 2003 to address Minnesota Board on Aging standards as they apply to AAAs. RDC Chairpersons, Executive Directors and Aging Directors devoted several planning meetings to identify the best process for addressing the new Minnesota Board on Aging standards and guidelines that were adopted in October, 2002.

For more information on Aging Services, call 320-235-8504, Ext. 30.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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