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UMVRDC

UPPER
MINNESOTA

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REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION

Annual Report

BIG STONE COUNTY

Brent Olson, Ortonville
County Board
Shirley Finberg, Clinton
Municipalities
Harold Dimberg, Ortonville
Townships

CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Jim Dahlvang, Montevideo
County Board
Ron Anderson, Milan
Municipalities
Rudolph Larson, Montevideo
Townships

LAC QUI PARLE COUNTY

Merril Johnson, Dawson
County Board
Greg Thole, Madison
Municipalities
Tim Patzer, Marietta
Townships

SWIFT COUNTY

Gary Hendrickx, Appleton
County Board
Ron Ronning, Appleton
Municipalities
Warren Rau, Appleton
Townships

YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY

Gary L. Johnson, Montevideo
County Board
Dan Jahn, Clarkfield
Municipalities
Erling Albin, Hanley Falls
Townships

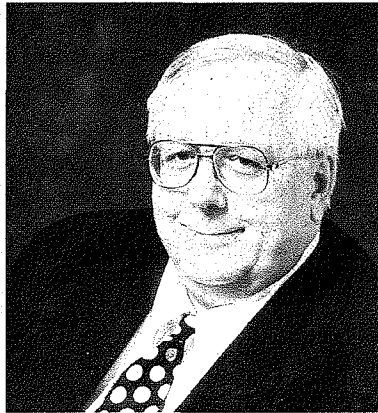
SCHOOL BOARDS

Paul Pillatzki, Dawson
Dawson/Boyd

TRIBAL COUNCIL

Teresa Peterson
Upper Sioux Community
PUBLIC INTEREST

Jaunita Lauritsen, Milan
WorkForce Council
Bruce Swigerd, Ortonville
Prairie Five CAC



Ron Anderson, 2006 Chairperson

As chair of Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC), I found this past year rewarding, demanding and concerning. Due to federal and state funding cuts, programs and staffing provided by the Commission were adversely affected. The staff has had to "reinvent the wheel" continuously and efficiently to service our clients and fulfill our mission. The possibilities of acquiring additional funding sources and maintaining current funding levels are tenuous. Consequently, the staff will have to cooperate, coordinate, and communicate even more efficiently than before to provide services and programs of our local units of government (LUGs); it can and will be done.

The multitude of programs and services offered to our region's citizens and LUGs have been and will continue to be professionally and expeditiously delivered. Services and programs currently available to and for Region 6W's citizens include: aging, housing, economic development, transportation, grant application, grant administration, GIS technology, advocacy and assorted others. Citizens and LUGs in Region 6W derive direct benefits — economic, social, environmental, health or governance.

An additional program or service, which the LUGs recently requested action or service on, is 'Renewable Energy'. Currently, the staff is in the very preliminary stages of addressing this request. The LUGs recognized the potential need for this program and have requested their Regional Development Commission to meet this need. The UMVRDC is consumer oriented, driven and controlled. We provide what our customers, the LUGs, need or want.

Commission members are comprised of an elected township official, municipal representative, and a county commissioner from each member county which includes Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine. The remaining commissioners are appointed by and from local non-profits, school boards, and the Upper Sioux Community. This Commission strives to work together for the maximum benefit of the region and its citizens. Survival and, hopefully, success is premised on mutual cooperation, collaboration and communication. **WE NEED EACH OTHER!**

The vision of the UMVRDC and its staff is further cooperation, collaboration and communication. As representatives of LUGS, WE have to set the example. The costs and efficiencies of government service delivery will diminish and provide a better return on the investment if WE effectively share services, staff, equipment, and mutual respect and affection of OUR LUGS. In summary, WE had a "great year"! Adversity was encountered and conquered! There is more to life than just survival; "It should be enjoyed, not endured"!

If you or your LUG have a concern that you need addressed, please contact the UMVRDC for assistance. Remember, WE are here to serve YOU!

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FINANCIAL REPORT

UPPER MN VALLEY REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE COMPARISON CURRENT FY 2006 AND PROPOSED FY 2007

	FY 2006	FY 2007		FY 2006	FY 2007
	CURRENT	PROPOSED		CURRENT	PROPOSED
	BUDGET	BUDGET		BUDGET	BUDGET
REVENUES:			EXPENDITURES:		
Agency Revenues			Salaries/Fringe	\$621,851	\$646,624
Interest/Levy/Misc/Reserve	243,500	247,500	Commissioners Expense	27,100	26,100
Aging	149,089	145,300	Audit	10,000	10,000
Grants Administration	75,000	101,750	Copy Charge/Xerox Lease	9,500	7,000
EDA/Community Development	159,536	112,128	Computer Technical Assistance	18,000	20,000
GIS Contracts	41,672	54,342	Contract for Services	2,500	5,500
Regional Tourism	115,000	116,000	Data Acquisition	500	500
Transportation/Natural Resources	73,324	111,000	Depreciation	14,400	14,400
			Dues	6,500	6,500
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 857,121	\$ 888,020	Equipment	1,000	1,000
			Insurance	3,500	3,500
			Lease/Service Agreement	4,000	4,000
			Legal Fees	500	1,500
			Miscellaneous/Employee Morale	4,000	4,000
			Office Rent	9,200	9,200
			Postage	11,000	11,000
			Printing/Advertising	8,000	5,000
			Registration	3,500	3,500
			Repairs/Maintenance	1,000	1,000
			Software/Software GIS	6,500	6,000
			Subscrip./Publications	1,000	1,000
			Supplies	8,000	8,000
			Telephone	8,000	8,000
			Tourism Trade Shows/Ads/Art Crawl	49,000	54,000
			Training/Training GIS	2,500	3,000
			Travel (Staff)	25,000	25,000
			TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$856,051	\$885,324
			EXCESS REV.		
			OVER (UNDER) EXP.	\$ 1,070	\$ 2,696

The latest audit of finances performed October 2005 by the firm of Lee & Berner, LTD covered the Fiscal Year 2005 finances. No negative findings were reported in that audit.

COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Current JOBZ Activity in Region 6W

The UMRDC continued serving as the JOBZ administrator for Region 6W. As JOBZ administrator, the UMRDC assists the JOBZ sub-zone communities with their administrative responsibilities, works with the Minnesota Department

The JOBZ program provides tax incentives to a new or expanding business that

higher wages. JOBZ cannot be used for retail development. The JOBZ program started January 1, 2004 and runs for 12 years until December 31, 2015.

If you are interested in learning more about the JOBZ program, visit DEED's website at <http://www.deed.state.mn.us/bizdev/jobz.htm>. If you have questions about the pro-

Region 6W Communities with JOBZ Approved Land

Big Stone County

- City of Ortonville (including Ortonville Township)

Chippewa County

- City of Milan
- City of Clara City
- City of Montevideo
- City of Maynard
- City of Granite Falls
- Camp Release Township

Lac qui Parle County

- City of Madison
- City of Dawson

Yellow Medicine County

- City of Granite Falls
- City of Clarkfield
- City of Porter
- City of Canby (including Hammer and Norman Townships)

Swift County

- City of Appleton
- City of Benson
- City of Danvers
- City of Murdock
- City of kerkhoven
- Torning Township
- Clontarf Township

of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and provides information to businesses regarding requirements for using the program. In September 2005, the UMRDC held a workshop for Region 6W JOBZ sub-zone administrators providing them with information on changes to the JOBZ law.

locates on JOBZ approved land. The tax incentives include exemption from sales tax, property tax (for buildings only) and income tax for owners. Job creation is a requirement of a business that uses the JOBZ program. The JOBZ program is for manufacturing, technology and other businesses that pay

program, please contact Ryan Krosch at 320.289.1981.



Appleton Receives A Small Cities Development Grant

The Department of Employment and Economic Development announced in early March that the city of Appleton was awarded a Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) grant. The city received the SCDP grant in its first attempt of submitting an application. SCDP grant applications are very competitive as only one-third of the applications in the state are typically funded each year. The UMRDC prepared the successful application.

Appleton received \$793,650 in SCDP funds. The SCDP grant, combined with \$321,000 of other matching funds, will be used to rehabilitate approximately 40 owner housing, rental housing and commercial buildings in targeted areas of the community.

In addition to preparing the grant application, the UMRDC is also doing the general administration for the grant. Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc. will

be doing the project administration for the commercial rehabilitation activities and the Swift County HRA will be handling the housing project administration.

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ST. PAUL, MN 55155

COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community & Economic Development Services and Assistance

The Community and Economic Development Division of the UMRDC is able to provide local units of government with a wide variety of services in a cost-effective manner. The following is a list of community development services the UMRDC staff can provide:

- Comprehensive plan creation or updates;
- Land use planning activities including

establishing future land use plans, urban growth boundary identification and annexation procedures;

- Goal, objective and policy development for guiding local government decision-making processes;
- Community profile and website design to use for an informational resource, community marketing, economic development and other activities;
- Ordinance creation or updates;
- Grant and loan applications and fiscal administration for projects including water, sewer, single-family and rental housing rehabilitation, new housing development, commercial building rehabilitation, community facilities and others;
- Revolving loan fund administration;
- Grant administration services;
- Special studies/plans including housing, economic development, business retention/expansion, natural resources,

downtown planning, community needs assessment, agriculture, technology, population, demographic analysis and other topics;

- Economic development authority creation;
- Survey creation, distribution and analysis;
- Meeting facilitation services;
- Business loan funds available for new or expanding businesses;
- Business consulting services (provided by Southwest Minnesota Small Business Development Center) including information for new business start-ups and expansions, business assessments, business plans, financial analysis, loan packaging and marketing; and
- Mapping projects including maps identifying parcel information, land use, zoning, ter/sewer infrastructure and addresses.

Please feel free to contact the UMRDC to find out more about the community development services that can be provided.

Available at the UMRDC!

MINNESOTA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC) *One-on-One Business Consulting*

Consultants are available to meet with you at the UMRDC office in Appleton.

Call the SBDC at 1-800-642-0684 Ext. 7386 to schedule an appointment!

Business Consulting Services are Free!

SBDC CONSULTING SERVICES INCLUDE:

Business Information

Information on regulatory requirements, market conditions, industry trends, technologies and more.

Business Assessment

Review your current business situation and make recommendations that will help capitalize on your strengths.

Business Plan

Review your business plan and suggest improvements to reach your business goals.

Financial Analysis & Loan Packaging

Analyze your financial situation, identify sources of financing, organize the necessary documentation and assist you in preparing a loan application.

Marketing

Strategic market analysis to help you clearly understand the characteristics of your customers and develop a solid marketing plan.

The Western Minnesota Revolving Loan Fund



Revolving loan fund dollars are available through the Western Minnesota Revolving Loan Fund (WesMN RLF) for new or expanding businesses in Region 6W. The WesMN RLF is a gap financing lender that requires local bank financial participation with each loan made. Secured loans ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$100,000 may be made for fixed assets and working capital. The maximum WesMN RLF participation rate is 33 percent on manufacturing projects and 20 percent on all other types of loans.

The emphasis of the WesMN RLF is to help finance business start-ups and expansions with a priority given to industrial/manufacturing businesses. Commercial/retail business projects, while eligible for WesMN RLF financing, must fulfill a local need for essential goods and services. Job creation is the

first priority of the WesMN RLF dollars while job retention is the second priority. The WesMN RLF has portfolio standards of one job created or saved for every \$10,000 of WesMN RLF funds loaned and a minimum of two private dollars borrowed to every one WesMN RLF dollar loaned.

In Fiscal Year 2006, the WesMN RLF made loans totaling \$242,000 to new and expanding businesses in Region 6W. These WesMN RLF loan dollars helped leverage nearly \$2 million in other public, private and owner funds for projects that created new business and job growth. These loans will result in 34 jobs being created and nine retained.

Loans are made by the WesMN RLF Loan Board with staff support coming from the UMRDC.

Region 6W CEDS Update Completed

During the summer and fall of 2005 the UMRDC completed a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) update for Region 6W. Updates to the CEDS are done annually with major revisions done every five years. A major revision to the Region 6W CEDS was completed in 2003.

A CEDS is required to qualify the region for United States Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants under its public works, economic adjustment and most planning programs. EDA funding supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs, reduce unemployment and under-employment, and increase incomes in areas of economic distress.

A CEDS is the result of a local planning process designed to guide the eco-

nomical growth of an area. A CEDS process will help create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. It provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industry concerned with economic development.

The CEDS must be the result of a continuing economic development planning process, developed with broad based and diverse community participation, and contain the following:

- An analysis of economic and community development problems and opportunities including incorporation of any relevant material or suggestions from other government sponsored or supported plans;
- Background and history of the economic development situation of the area covered, with a discussion of the economy, including as appropriate, geography,

population, labor force, resources, and the environment;

- A discussion of community participation in the planning efforts;
- A section setting forth goals and objectives for taking advantage of the opportunities of and solving the economic development problems of the area serviced;
- A plan of action, including suggested projects to implement objectives and goals set forth in the strategy; and
- Performance measures that will be used to evaluate whether and to what extent goals and objectives have been or are being met.

If you have any questions or comments about the Region 6W CEDS or would like to obtain a copy, please call Ryan Krosch at 320-289-1981.

Community & Economic Development Projects in FY 2006

Some of the community development projects completed by UMRDC staff in Fiscal Year 2006 included:

- Prepared a successful Small Cities Development Program application for the city of Appleton.
- Completed a comprehensive plan for Yellow Medicine County.
- Started work on comprehensive plans for the city of Canby and Swift County.
- Assisted Chippewa County with exploring options for developing a county economic development service provider.
- Started exploring options for creating

a joint powers board and providing staff assistance to do economic development activities in the cities of Watson, Milan and Maynard.

- Finished work on all-hazard mitigation plans for Swift County and the Upper Sioux Community.
- Administered grants for the cities of Granite Falls, Clarkfield, Benson, Watson and Appleton.
- Served as JOBZone Administrator for the Upper Minnesota Valley (Region 6W) JOBZone.
- Began working with the City of Odessa on a USDA Rural Development

application for funds to repair the city's wastewater system.

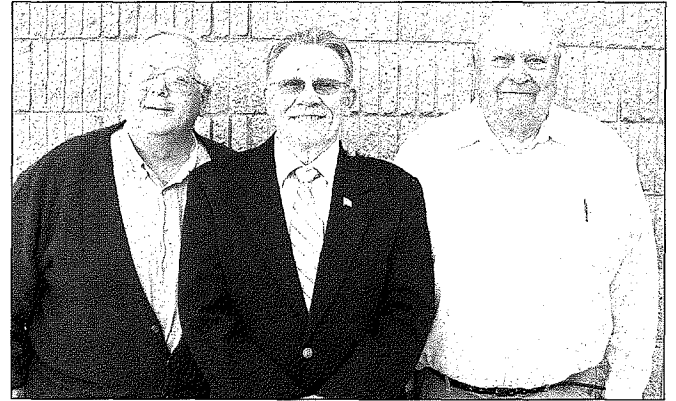
- Organized quarterly meetings of the economic development professionals in Regions 6W and 6E.
- Completed the region's comprehensive economic development strategy update for the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration to maintain the region's status as an economic development district.
- Completed a housing assessment for the Granite Falls EDA.

UMVRDC COMMISSIONERS



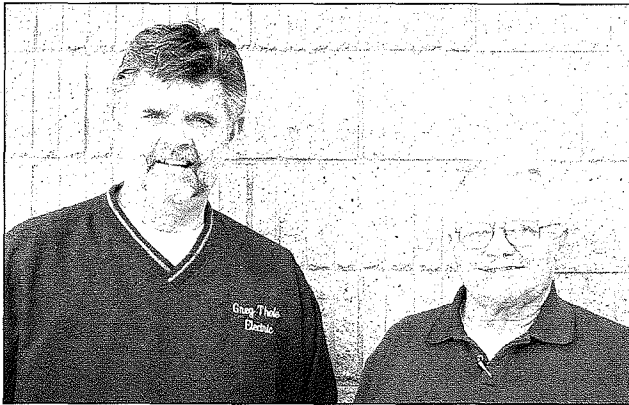
Big Stone County

Shirley Finberg, *Municipalities*; (Not pictured: Brent Olson, *County Board*; Harold Dimberg, *Ortonville Townships*;



Chippewa County (left to right)

Ron Anderson, *Municipalities*; Jim Dahlvang, *County Board*; Rudolph Larson, *Townships*



Lac qui Parle County (left to right)

Greg Thole, *Municipalities*; Merrill Johnson, *County Board*; (Not pictured: Tim Patzer, *Townships*)



Swift County (left to right)

Warren Rau, *Townships*; Ron Ronning, *Municipalities*; Gary Hendrickx, *County Board*;



Tribal Council/School Board/Public Interest (left to

right) Paul Pillatzke, *School Board*; Jaunita Lauritsen, *WorkForce Council*; Bruce Swigerd, *Prairie Five CAC*; (Not pictured: Teresa Peterson, *Upper Sioux Community*)



Yellow Medicine County (left to right)

Dan Jahn, *Municipalities*; Erling Albin, *Townships*; (Not pictured: Gary L. Johnson, *County Board*)

UMVRDC STAFF

(As of June 30, 2006)



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prairiewaters@umvrdc.org

Dawn Hegland, *Division Director, Transportation/
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TOURISM, TRANSPORTATION & RECREATION

Prairie Waters Enhances Region's Economic Development

The Prairie Waters Convention & Visitors Bureau has completed the first six months of the three year tourism funding program agreed upon by the five counties of Region 6W. Commissioners from each of the counties pledged the following amounts towards the area's tourism program each year for three years beginning in 2006: Big Stone/\$9,365; Lac qui Parle/\$7,500 (pledge formula determined by UMRDC was \$11,050); Swift/\$13,967 (for 2006 only); Chippewa/\$14,816; and Yellow Medicine/\$13,310. These pledges amount to \$58,958 and account for nearly 44 percent of the total budget in 2006.

Another \$27,000 is pledged from funding cities in the region: Montevideo, Granite Falls, Appleton, Benson, Madison, Dawson, Clara City, Milan and Clinton. These pledges generated another 20 percent towards the total revenue



for Prairie Waters FY2006. The UMRDC contribution for Indirect Costs is \$10,000 or another 7.6 percent towards the revenue.

In addition, the private sector, in the form of a newly developed membership sector, pledged to raise \$5,000, at \$100/member for 2006. We are currently at 43 members and continue to recruit to meet our projections.

To further support our marketing revenues, Prairie Waters undertook cooperative advertising partnership again this year with Explore Minnesota Tourism. Forty percent of qualified ad and marketing costs were paid for by the state through this program. Additional support for ad costs came

from several members who participated in national and regional campaigns.

Our two biggest marketing projects were moderately successful this year. Our visitor guide was able to generate revenue to produce a 28-page collateral piece to be used in response to all inquiries. Ad sales were lighter than expected as the region continues to understand the competitive need for such pieces.

The regional "tear map" has been distributed and is being well received. It has been distributed throughout the five-county region and continues to be placed in new locations as its availability becomes known.

We continue to involve more private business in the development of tourism programs and continue to showcase our region in as many markets as possible.



Meander - Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl

Preparations are being made for the third annual *Meander ~ Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl* to be held from Friday, September 29 through Sunday October 1. This self-guided tour of artist studios, galleries and shops will feature the work of more than 50 local artists and craft workers from Canby to Benson, Granite Falls to Ortonville and all points in between. The event is free and open to the public.

Visitors along the *Meander* route will have the opportunity to view the award winning work of professional artists such as Gene & Lucy Tokheim of Dawson, Karen Jensen of Milan and Katia Adnreeva of

Granite Falls. In addition, many lesser known but equally distinguished artists such as Malena Handeen of Milan, Deb Connolly of Danvers and Torri Hanna of Canby will open their studios to the public.

The *Meander* is the result of a year-long cooperative planning effort by a group of area artists convened by the UMRDC, Western Minnesota Prairie Waters CVB and Clean Up Our River Environment (CURE). "We consider this

event as a great example of bottom up economic development that can happen when entrepreneurs, government agencies, non-profit organizations and creative people work together," said Patrick Moore, one of the organizers of the *Meander*.

"The *Meander* is a great way to showcase the unique aspects of the Prairie Waters Region," stated Dawn Hegland, of the

UMVRDC. "We believe that events like this show visitors from the Twin Cities, Sioux Falls and the Fargo/Moorhead area

Meander
Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl

See *Meander* on p. 10

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

The UMRVDC continues to coordinate the efforts of the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway as the Byway continues to work toward the goal of encouraging economic development through the promotion, preservation and protection of the historic, cultural and natural qualities of the Minnesota River Valley. The Byway Alliance has representatives from chambers of commerce, CVBs, historical societies, economic development associations, elected officials and state agencies. They collaborate with other organizations to promote the valley and work on projects to improve access and information distribution about its wonderful attractions and resources.

The year 2005 was filled with many exciting events and projects throughout the beautiful Minnesota River Valley. The Valley was carved by the Glacial River Warren 13,000 years ago with such tremendous force that it exposed the underlying granite bedrock that is 3.8

billion years old. Many visitors come to the 287-mile corridor to see these outcroppings and the plant species, some of which are rare, growing in their natural habitat. Visitors also come to camp in our parks, canoe our creeks and rivers, shop in our unique stores and savor our delicious meals often made from locally grown products.

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance worked on a strategic planning session with assistance from Mark Anderson, MN State Byways Coordinator and Michelle Ethun, America's Byways Resource Center staff. The Alliance adopted an aggressive list of projects, set time lines and assigned primary responsibilities.

The Byway Interpretive Committee identified 16 sites throughout the Valley in

the first phase of interpretive sign construction, and identified sites for future information kiosks. Members of the Alliance gathered material and started the writing and layout design process. The guidelines created last year will allow for plenty of individual creativity in the sign, while at the same time creating panels that help tie our three themes together and create more awareness for the Byway. It is our hope that others developing interpretive signs along the Byway will use the same guidelines. These signs will be finalized and fabricated in late summer 2006.

The Byway Marketing Committee developed a new 24-page full color brochure packed with photos and information about the Byway. They are distributed throughout the River Valley and at state information centers and are sent in response to calls and email inquiries. The

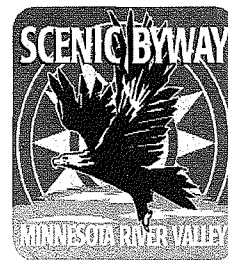
committee also developed a postcard in celebration of national Tourism Week in May. The postcard announced the new byway guide.

As interest continues to grow in our historic sites and recreational amenities. Communities throughout the 287-mile corridor are sharing events, happenings, tours and projects with one another via email which is then related to all our respective networks. By looking at the Byway calendar on the website www.mnrivervalley.com, you will see events to please any family member or tour group.

Representatives of the Byway attended workshops and meetings during the year both on the state and national level. These opportunities are valuable to learn from other byways or learn more about how to effectively manage our Byway and ongoing projects.

Our membership drive has been successful. More than \$2,000 was generated for our projects through this effort. We very much appreciate the continued support of our members and hope that this will grow each year and allow further projects to be completed.

The Minnesota Historical Society has resolved staffing needs at both the Lower Sioux Agency site and Fort Ridgely Historic site due to heavy lobbying throughout the Valley and additional funding from the state. The Byway continues to be a voice to help our legislators understand the importance of interpretation of history

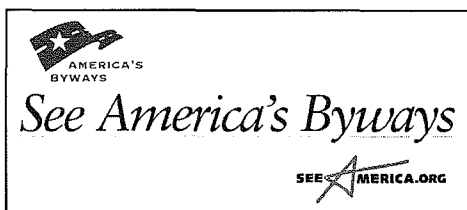


where it occurred.

A state recreational trail is being planned that will run throughout the River Valley bringing tourism dollars into the area and providing a healthy experience for families to get out and enjoy the Valley. Many of the Byway Committee members are actively involved with the development of potential segments of this state trail corridor.

"The Alliance remains dedicated to protecting the intrinsic values of the river valley. This will be accomplished in part through support of efforts to have historic sites open to help tell the story of our byway, developing further means of interpreting the sites without onsite information, and in some cases working directly on their preservation," stated former Byway President James Lundgren.

For more information, contact Dawn Helgand at 320-289-1981 or dawn.helgand@umvrdc.org.



Transportation Planning Assistance

The UMRDC continues to provide local transportation planning assistance to the region through a contract with the MN Department of Transportation. The region's Transportation Advisory Committee meets quarterly to review, discuss and recommend transportation projects including the prioritization of millions of dollars worth of road, bridge, rail crossing, public transit and trail projects. Recommendations are given to the UMRDC and to Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs). ATPs develop prioritized lists of transportation projects for a multi-county area. Region 6W participates in two ATPs, each of which encompass a different 12-county area.

Transportation issues continue to be

critical issues for our rural, agrarian region. We rely heavily on the existing transportation system to get to work, school, medical appointments, vacation, and to get commodities into and out of the region. The UMRDC would like to assist the local units of government to ensure its people and businesses of this region are adequately served by all modes of transportation.

Some of the transportation projects that were included in FY 2006:

- Participated on ATPs 4 and 8 as technical staff and as alternate voting members;
- Provided information to MnDOT on the statewide functional class study;
- Assisted Appleton, Granite Falls, Clara City, Benson and Ortonville as

requested regarding trail planning;

- Participated on the ATP 8 Transportation Enhancement Committee;
- Participated on the ATP 4 Transportation Enhancement, Discretionary, and Safety Committees;
- Hosted four Transportation Advisory Committee meetings; and
- Coordinated with other RDCs on transportation issues.

If you have a transportation related comment or concern, we would love to hear it! Contact Dawn Hegland at 320.289.1981 or dawn.hegland@umvr.org.

Continued from Meander on p. 8

That the Upper Minnesota River is a great 'trip on a tank full' destination for those seeking authentic culture, history and scenic vistas."

Recent studies conducted by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center and others have revealed an emerging trend toward this type of "nature and culture" tourist travel. In 2005, the U of M Tourism Center conducted 178 personal visitor interviews of *Meander* participants during the weekend event in an effort to measure the economic and attitudinal impact of this event on the region. The results were very positive.

- Average travel party size was 3.7 people;
- 74 percent are likely to return again to

the event;

- 50 percent were residents outside the five-county region;
- 44 percent were married with grown children;
- 16 percent were married with children under 18;
- 14 percent were married with no children;
- Average age was 55 years old;
- 81 percent of those attending were female; and
- 51 percent reported income of more than \$50,000.

The *Meander* is about making relationships, welcoming people and being connected to the history, culture and landscape where we live. By encouraging vis-

itors to explore the region and by visiting artists in their own creative studio environments, we are celebrating a lifestyle that represents the small, the handmade, and the personal and local culture of the Upper Minnesota River Region.

For more information and to receive a brochure about the event, visit www.artsmeander.com or call Dawn Hegland, the toll free Prairie Waters line at 866-866-5432.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MnRAAA) will begin its third year of operation January 1, 2007. The MnRAAA Joint Powers Board is the designated Area Agency on Aging, consisting of two commissioners from each Regional Development Commission (RDC), a non-voting chair and an ex-officio member from each Advisory Council on Aging located within each RDC. The MnRAAA planning and service area encompasses the 27 counties of southwest Minnesota. Offices are maintained in Appleton, Willmar, Slayton and Mankato. The Slayton office houses the Call Center, where all Senior LinkAge

Line™ calls go and the Mankato office is authorized to be the administrative and fiscal agent, also completing grants management duties.

Roles of the MnRAAA include administration of federal and state dollars for elderly services through grants or contracts, providing people with information and assistance, advocacy and program development and coordination.

Each Economic Development Area (EDA) of MnRAAA has an Advisory



Council on Aging (ACA). Primary functions of the ACA involve serving as an advisory body on matters related to the Area Plan; make formal recommendations to each RDC; identify the needs, concerns and issues of older adults (people 60+) in each EDA; consider alternatives and develop goals to address identified needs of older adults; assist in awarding Older Americans Act funding; and advocate on behalf of older adults at the local, state and federal levels.

ElderCare Development Partnership

The Southwest ElderCare Development Partnership (SW EDP) is a collaborative funded by a state grant through the Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA). The SW EDP includes the counties of Region 6W. The following principles are used to provide direction for EDP activities:

- Focus on activities that achieve the re-balancing of Minnesota's Long-Term Care System.

- Foster development of community-based commitment and community-based approach to delivering long-term care services for elderly persons in their homes.

- Align technical assistance provided to Community Services/ Service Development grant applicants.

- Establish a broad range of quality service options for frail elderly, low-income persons.

- Focus local development strategies on achieving effective and efficient use of existing public resources, including the use of technological advancement in services.

If you have any questions regarding the activities of the MnRAAA or EDP, contact Michelle Bouta 320-289-1981.

Final Medicare Part D Enrollment Numbers

The MN River Area Agency on Aging Call Center in Slayton recently reported on the number of people assisted with Medicare Part D enrollment. The Initial Enrollment Period began last November and ended on May 15.

In the five counties of Region 6W, 566 Medicare beneficiaries were assisted with low-income subsidy applications by Senior LinkAge Line™ staff. This program allows those with low income and assets to pay a reduced Medicare Part D premium and co-pays between \$1-5 for their prescriptions.

The Social Security Administration determines eligibility in this program and applications are continuously accepted.

Along with applying for the Low-Income Subsidy, there were 342 people that had the Senior LinkAge Line™ staff also assist them in enrolling in a Medicare Part D plan. There are 14 Benchmark plans that qualified individuals can enroll in to receive a subsidy.

There were 432 Medicare beneficiaries that were assisted with the enrollment process. These individuals did not qualify

for the Subsidy but wanted to enroll in a Prescription Drug Plan. This brings the total number of individuals helped with enrollment to 774.

The next Enrollment Period will begin on November 15 and go until December 31. There are some exceptions to this such as those new to Medicare. If you have questions related to Medicare Part D, please contact Berit Skurdahl at 320-289-1981 or berit.skurdahl@umvrdc.org.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Carrie Quast has been hired as the new Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Planner. She started work at the UMVRDC on February 13. Carrie is from Winsted and is now living in Montevideo. She has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the U of M - Duluth and a Masters in GIS from St. Mary's University of Minnesota in Winona. Carrie had just recently been working for the Rice County Assessor's



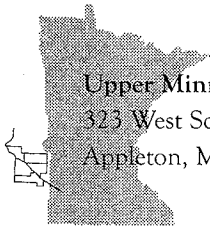
Office. Other work experience includes time with the GIS Department at St. Mary's University and with the USDA Risk Management Agency in St. Paul.

Carrie's current focus at the UMVRDC is to finish ongoing projects such as ditch mapping projects in Swift, Yellow Medicine, Lac qui Parle and Chippewa Counties, and parcel map updates in Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties which allows for easy reproduction. As

she becomes familiar with Region 6W, future plans include creating a Region 6W GIS user group and bringing GIS to the World Wide Web using Internet Mapping Services. She will be visiting each county and many of the cities to discuss their GIS needs.

Carrie's experience and schooling have given her a wide knowledge of GIS and its applications, so feel free to contact her with your GIS questions. Carrie can be contacted at 320-289-1981 or by email at gisrdc@umvrdc.org.

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