

For nearly four decades, the Center for Rural Affairs has stood strong like a house built on stone.

The rock of rural values is our foundation – fairness and justice for rural people, care for the land and water, widespread ownership of farms and businesses, citizen responsibility for community and commitment to the common good over selfish interest.

With you, we have fought for a better future for family farms, ranches and small businesses; for rural communities that offer genuine opportunity to rural people; and for stewardship of our land and water. Together, we have confronted powerful interests and fought the tough but crucial battles from which others have shrunk. Together we've persevered — standing like a house on rock in the midst of a powerful storm, providing steadfast hope in times that test our faith.

With you, we have made a difference. With engaged citizens of conscience and persistent, well-informed advocacy, we've changed policy in Washington. With you, we've enabled rural communities to chart new courses and family farms and small businesses to create a better future.

But we have not yet done enough to create the future rural people want and deserve.

We stand at a crossroads in history. We must either set a different course for rural America or suffer irreversible damage. We have reached a point in our work together at which we must increase our impact to make a bigger difference in building a better future.

Therefore, we are launching this crucial initiative to build the larger, permanent financial base that must be put in place to move to that higher level of impact.

This effort builds on the 1996 action by the Center for Rural Affairs Board of Directors to establish the Granary endowment as a permanent fund to benefit the Center for Rural Affairs. In the three years following its creation, the Granary received gifts of over \$6 million. Those gifts have been invested to earn income and forever support the work of the Center for Rural Affairs.

If in coming years we were able to double our endowment from \$6 million to \$12 million, the Granary would provide \$600,000 annually to support the work of the Center, funds we can leverage to obtain new grant funds and other support to significantly intensify our work and its impact.

Giving to the Granary is an opportunity for you to shape the destiny of rural America by strengthening both the intensity and sustainability of the critical work of the Center for Rural Affairs – your work. It is the opportunity to empower generations to come to continue our work to advance the timeless values that you hold and we share.



“Rural advocacy is not for those who cannot see beyond the short-term. It’s not the work of the fainthearted. It takes vision, commitment, and perseverance and we need them all now more than ever. The key to our future is ordinary people committed to long-term, persistent efforts to build a better future that reflects the common good. The people who live our issues, join our efforts and support our work are the core strength of the Center for Rural Affairs.” Chuck Hassebrook, Executive Director since 1996, Center staff since 1978.

Where we've been...

We have made a difference in the lives of rural people...

- ◆ Our work on the farm bill secured \$15 million for rural microenterprise development and improvements in the Conservation Security Program that rewards farmers and ranchers for good stewardship. We won emphasis on small, mid-size and beginning family farmers and ranchers in the Value Added Producer Grants Programs, which makes grants to help farmers and ranchers reach high value markets and process commodities. In Nebraska, we won new state funding and tax credits for rural entrepreneurs and rural communities — providing a model for other states and the federal government.
- ◆ We have helped family farmers and ranchers start over a dozen new cooperatives to reach higher value markets.
- ◆ Our Rural Enterprise Assistance Project has served nearly 5,000 small rural businesses with training, technical assistance, and over \$4 million in loans as well as leveraging over \$10 million from other lending sources. Our Women's Business Center received the national "Excellence in Work with Women Entrepreneurs" award from the Association for Enterprise Opportunity. We launched a Hispanic Business Center to assist Latino entrepreneurs with technical assistance, lending and other small business development assistance.

"I first heard of a need for the Center in the 70s when I was teaching a course called the "Literature of Agriculture," mostly to ag college kids looking at the story of farming from ancient times to the present. Some of my students were telling me of rich foreigners and big companies buying up prime Nebraska land, and I didn't like that particularly. I was also reading organic farming and gardening publications and Wendell Berry; and, like Berry and Rodale, I wanted clean food and the survival of the kind of family farm that I had grown up on, but I had no idea what actions to take.

Then a kind of miracle occurred. In the mid-70s, I met the staff of the Center at UNL and read *Who Will Sit Up with the Corporate Sow?*. I fell in love with the idea of rural people fighting to defend good food and a decent rural life. I started attending every Center meeting I could, and sought and gained membership on the Center's board;. From then on, the Center's goals became my goals." Paul Olson, Center for Rural Affairs and Granary Board member

"I fell in love with the idea of rural people fighting to defend good food and a decent rural life," Paul Olson

Small dreams make big business

Karen Runkle answered the call of entrepreneurship after an unsuccessful search for some fresh produce. What started out as a craving for a fresh tomato, ended up as *Lil' Ladybug Gardens & Greenhouse*.

Karen knew there was a customer base for local produce and Community Supported Agriculture. All she needed was training and some money to invest in her idea.

Karen initially contacted the Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP), a microenterprise development program of the Center for Rural Affairs that works with startup and existing small businesses in Nebraska. She attended 'Business Plan Basics' training before she opened Lil' Ladybug.

Then in February 2007 she attended the first MarketPlace Conference in Kearney. There, Karen learned to keep good records for her business, networked with other entrepreneurs and service providers, and acquired new customers. "The MarketPlace seminar in Kearney was a great place to learn and rub elbows with other entrepreneurs," says Karen.

Now with the tools she has acquired, her greenhouse is successful and since the initiation of her business in 2005, business has tripled.

"The MarketPlace seminar in Kearney was a great place to learn and rub elbows with other entrepreneurs," said Karen Runkle



Karen Runkle of Hay Springs, Nebraska with her tomato plants at the *Lil' Ladybug* greenhouse from which she markets produce as well as other gardening items.

We have grown our influence and impact...

- ◆ Readership of the Center’s newsletter, alerts and updates has grown to 25,000 individuals across the nation, growing nearly 70% in 2007 alone. Our support base, reach and impact are growing with it. We have supporters and allies in all 50 states.
- ◆ We are making the voice of rural America heard across the nation. Our work to secure farm payment limits was recently covered in over 300 newspaper and hundreds of other media outlets nationwide, including *USA Today*, *Time Magazine* and the *Washington Post*. Our report on USDA’s failure to serve small and mid-sized farms was reported in nearly 200 newspapers and on over 1000 radio stations across the country.
- ◆ We are engaging tens of thousands of citizens in speaking out to their congressional representatives through our new National Rural Action Network (see below). In Idaho, North Carolina, North Dakota and Minnesota we are informing, training and assisting grassroots rural leaders in shaping the Congressional debate over critical rural issues.

Funding for rural areas’ development is promoted

■ A Center for Rural Affairs official says just 1 percent of annual farm bill spending could greatly revitalize smaller communities.

By JOSEPH MORTON
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

WASHINGTON — The federal government could pour \$500 million a year into rural development by carving off just 1 percent of annual farm bill spending, a Nebraska advocate for rural interests told the Senate Agriculture Committee.

“It would set off a wave of new opportunities in rural America,” said Chuck Hassebrook of the Center for Rural Affairs in Lyons, Neb.

Omaha World Herald,
February 14, 2007

Sen. Lindsey Graham,

Being a farmer I understand both sides of this complex issue; however, I urge you as leader of the Senate to embrace the Farm Bill reform efforts of Senators Harkin, Grassley and Dorgan.

A farmer from Lake City, South Carolina

Sen. John Sununu,

I urge you to support the Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program in the Rural Development Title of the 2007 Farm Bill. Please fight for mandatory funding of \$20 million dollars for this program.

A Farm Bill that supports small business development in rural communities is widely supported and will help all of rural America. Microenterprise programs reduce poverty, build communities, and give entrepreneurs vital skills they will use for the rest of their lives. Please support this important initiative.

... Over the years, [my] small organization has helped thousands of people become more successful business owners and has significantly revitalized the town of Bethlehem by building its entrepreneurial community. Yet the resources to support this work are few and far between.

... I have had the opportunity to support hundreds of rural microenterprise development programs across the U.S. in delivering much need services to thousands of rural emerging and established business owners. I constantly hear that there is so much more they could do if these organizations had access to the level of funding included in the Farm Bill.

The Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program will reap tremendous benefits in rural America. Please give it your full support.

An organizational ally from Littleton, New Hampshire

Where we will go from here...

The Center's nearly four decade track record provides the base from which to build to a higher level of impact. The next step for us — supporters like you together with board and staff — is building a stronger financial base to enable us to intensify our work and increase our impact.

We will put more organizers in the field to win more hearts and minds, bring in new people to build our movement and work with you and other long-time supporters to activate the grassroots power to win key votes in Congress. We'll do more analysis, prompt greater coverage in the news media and spread our ideas further. We'll help more people — you and others not yet part of the Center — build stronger farms, businesses and communities. Our current goals for additional funding include:

- **Build the movement for a better rural future by getting more people in more places involved in our work.** We'll use the power of the Internet to multiply the movement. We'll engage our current supporters in prompting their friends and associates to join us in advocating for rural America. We will draw people to us by building the nation's foremost website for practical information on revitalizing rural communities.
- **Identify the most critical emerging issues facing rural people in the future – just as we documented the growth and threat of corporate farming when others said it was not a threat.** We will launch new analyses on the rural aspects of the emerging national debate over health care funding and climate change. We will explore strategies to shape development of the bio-fuels industry to sustain natural resources and place ownership in the hands of farmers, workers and rural community members. We will identify the not-yet-identified issues when there is still time to address them proactively and effectively.
- **Provide more loans, training and technical assistance to rural small business and microenterprise.** Reach out to currently underserved parts of Nebraska and to Hispanic Nebraskans. Assist organizations in other states in building similar programs to support rural small business development.
- **Help rural entrepreneurs — both on the farm and in town — build new joint ventures and cooperatives to capture profitable markets.** We will help family farmers and ranchers capture the growing opportunities in premium markets for natural, humanely raised livestock. We will help rural small businesses band together to capture growing markets for business services in metropolitan areas. We will help beginning farmers secure profitable markets and access to land and capital.
- **Help more communities mobilize their leaders, citizens and young people to build a better future.** We will help communities develop leaders, engage rural youth, prompt new farm and business startups and make the strategic investments in quality of life to draw new families to reenergize the town.

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The Center's new home, in Lyons, Nebraska, (population 963) provides access to modern office space and state of the art technology while still serving to ground us in the values of rural, agricultural communities that have been the touchstone of our work for 35 years.

The Plan

The Center for Rural Affairs staff and Board are personally reaching out to you and each of our other top 500 donors to request your participation in this drive to strengthen our endowment and work.

We are offering a variety of options for making gifts of any size to the Granary. Many of us cannot make large gifts from annual income, but can through planned gifts from our estates, real estate holdings, bequests, trusts, securities and life insurance. We are seeking gifts of a variety of sizes to collectively raise an additional \$6 million.

For larger gifts of \$100,000 and over, we will discuss with donors means of publicly acclaiming their gift and generosity. Following are some examples of the sizes of gifts we will pursue and their potential impact.

These uses are offered only as examples. We are seeking undesignated gifts that allow the Center's current and future board and staff members to commit endowment income to the highest priority for rural America.

A gift of \$1 million would provide earnings of \$50,000 each year forever. A gift of that size could pay the salary and benefits the addition of one new long-term staff member to address critical work that we are otherwise unable to fund.

A gift of \$500,000 would provide \$25,000 each year forever. That could support a strategic contract with a key lobbyist who can reach policy makers we cannot otherwise reach on a critical piece of legislation. Or it could provide matching funds to secure a state or federal grant to launch a critical new initiative.

A gift of \$100,000 would provide \$5,000 each year forever. That could cover the annual travel costs of one of our organizing staff, allowing us to reach out to rural people and engage them in the work of creating a better future for rural America.

A gift of \$50,000 would be the equivalent of making a \$2,500 donation each year forever.

A gift of \$10,000 would be the equivalent of making a \$500 donation each year forever.

Gifts of all sizes are deeply appreciated.

Once received, Granary assets will be managed with prudence and integrity to ensure your gift and work for Rural America endure for generations to come. The Center for Rural Affairs emphasizes long-term fiscal integrity over short-term comfort. Because of our fiscal stewardship we have avoided overspending and fiscal crises. During tough financial times we have never missed a payment or laid off staff.

The Center for Rural Affairs emphasizes long-term fiscal integrity over short-term comfort.

The Benefits

The Center for Rural Affairs' work is made possible by diverse sources of support. We receive yearly contributions from people in each of America's 50 states. Most of the Center's funding comes from private foundations. They have enabled the Center to become a leader in fighting for rural America. So we will continue to pursue annual donations aggressively, as well as grants from public agencies and foundations.

But we will only reach our full potential when we match grants with a permanent source of income, insulated from the whims and prejudices of grant makers.

A strong endowment enables the Center to respond to the issues of greatest urgency on the farms and main streets of rural America, rather than those with the most appeal in the suites of Washington, Minneapolis and New York office buildings.

A strong endowment enables us to innovate and pursue once in a lifetime opportunities that would be lost without flexible resources under our control. A strong endowment enables us to do more to support grassroots initiatives to create genuine opportunity and a better future in rural America. It enables us to act with independence and conscience in building the power for rural people to control their own destiny.

What It Means to You

The opportunity to give to the Granary is your opportunity to leave a legacy that reflects your values, the way you lived your life and the things that matter most to you. It is the opportunity to leave a legacy of strong rural communities, fairness, family farming, social justice and care for land and water for generations to come.

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Values. Worth. Action.