

Spring 2008

REAP Award Recipients

Congratulations to all of this year's REAP awardees!

Jose Lopez — Entrepreneur Award

Jose Lopez was honored for his efforts, integrity, and leadership. Jose received the Center for Rural Affairs' Entrepreneur award. The Center for Rural Affairs works to strengthen small businesses, family farms and ranches, and rural communities.

"There are not enough words to describe how much I appreciate receiving this award. I have been working my whole life and never got any recognition. Thanks to the Center for Rural Affairs and their Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) for the great work they're doing and for helping small entrepreneurs," said Lopez.

Jose came to Nebraska from California 11 years ago looking for better working opportunities. In 2003 he opened Lopez Auto Sales, a used car dealership located on Highway 30 in North Bend, Nebraska. When he saw the opportunity to buy a building and relocate his business to the Schuyler, Nebraska, area, Jose contacted the Rural Enterprise Assistant Project (REAP) Hispanic Business Center. He received help with his business plan and packaging the loan and was able to purchase the building and the business located in the building.

With an investment of over \$200,000, sales in the new business have increased every month. His auto sales business will stay in North Bend, and plans are to remodel the Schuyler building and open a new auto business there. "Jose has been very supportive of his communities, giving back to both Schuyler and North Bend. He sponsored 10 youths from Columbus High School to attend the MarketPlace small business conference," commented Adriana Dungan, the REAP Hispanic Business Center Director.

Jose resides in Schuyler with his wife and three children.



REAP award recipients are pictured with awardees from other Center for Rural Affairs programs and a retiring member of the Center's board of directors.

Becky Wyatt — Small Business of the Year Award

Becky Wyatt received the Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) Small Business of the Year award.

"I am so honored to have even been considered for this award, let alone receive the award," said Becky. "I am truly thrilled!"

In 2002, Becky Wyatt became employed with the



Becky Wyatt receives her award from REAP Panhandle Business Specialist Jerry Terwilliger.

Dove's Pantry, a health food business in Sidney, Nebraska. Becky had the opportunity to purchase the Dove's Pantry business in 2006. She contacted REAP, a small business development program that offers business training, technical assistance, loans, and networking across rural Nebraska. REAP assisted her with a business plan, including the business purchase and a relocation. With help from her father, the purchase was accomplished.

Becky has relied on REAP as her business has grown, receiving technical assistance and, eventually, a loan to expand inventory and purchase equipment. In 2007 she was awarded \$2,000 from the REAP Women's Business Center/Women & Company Program. Becky manages her business and is actively involved with the Cheyenne County Ladies Chamber of Commerce, Western Nebraska Community College (Freshman Mentoring Program), and her church.

"The Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) program was truly a blessing in helping me with my business. I hope other entrepreneurs out there with aspirations for opening a business know that with enough determination it can be achieved, and the REAP program can help make that business a reality," continued Wyatt.

"Becky exemplifies our qualifications for the REAP Small Business Award with her management of the business, her involvement with community organization, and her volunteer work," commented Jerry Terwilliger, REAP Business Specialist for the Nebraska Panhandle region.

Rina Orellana — Officer of the Year Award

Rina Orellana received the Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) Officer of the Year award in February.



Rina Orellana accepts her Officer of the Year award.

“I didn’t expect this award; it really got me by surprise! I never thought that I could receive such a privilege. It was a pleasure to receive this honor and to be included in an organization such as the Center for Rural Affairs that have these programs that give us the opportunities to achieve our dreams as part of the community that we live in and to work towards the future for the generations to come,” expressed Rina.

Since its inception in 2006, Rina has served as

Secretary of the Columbus Hispanic Networking Group serving Latino businesses in Columbus, Nebraska.

“Rina became involved with REAP after attending a Business Plan Training course. She was elected secretary for the group, and has gone above and beyond to keep the group on track by scheduling meetings, notifying members and potential members of meetings, and making sure everything is in place before meetings,” remarked Adriana Dungan, the REAP Hispanic Business Center Director.

In the fall of 2007, an increased workload at her job forced Rina to resign her duties. Happily, she still participates and is a good promoter of REAP and the Columbus Networking Group.

Lance Hedquist — Friend of the Year Award

Lance Hedquist received the Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) Friend of the Year award.

Lance is the City Administrator of South Sioux City, Nebraska, and a strong supporter of REAP, a small business development program that offers business training, technical assistance, loans, and networking across rural Nebraska. Lance encourages individuals to use REAP services, and every time he has an opportunity to speak about REAP he does.

“I am truly honored for this prestigious award. I am extremely fortunate to work for a great community that seeks to advance economic opportunities for all of our citizens,” said Hedquist.

The REAP Hispanic Business Association

in South Sioux City has benefited greatly from Lance’s support, as has the overall business community. “When there are Minority Business Meetings he is always there and willing to give his support in any way he can. Lance has helped many Hispanic business owners in town with their business needs and is a great help in finding the right resources for REAP clients,” said Adriana Dungan, the REAP Hispanic Business Center Director.



Lance Hedquist stands with Adriana Dungan, REAP Hispanic Business Center Director.

Karen Fritschle, Arbor Bank, Nebraska City (formerly Otoe County) — REAP Extra Mile Award

Karen Fritschle (Frits) is the Business Development and Marketing Officer for Arbor Bank at Nebraska City. Karen has been a strong promoter and partner of REAP and its services. Karen has been the EDGE class coordinator and instructor the past two years and is preparing for the third class early this spring.

Karen is always willing to partner on trainings/ workshops with REAP and understands the role REAP plays in small business development and the importance of collaboration. She developed and designed the new REAP brochure in the fall of 2007. Karen has furnished office space at the bank for workshops and REAP loan closings with clients when necessary. It is great to have a friend like Frits!

REAP awards were given on the eve of the *MarketPlace: Opening Doors to Success Conference* held in Columbus, Nebraska, on February 27, 2008. Photos courtesy of Rhea Landholm from Sheldon, Iowa. Jose Lopez and Karen Fritschle were unable to attend the Awards Banquet and will receive their awards at a later date.