Iowa communities benefit from local REC funding secured through the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDL&G) program. Recently, $1.79 million has been awarded to fund portions of three projects in Britt, Charles City, and Dysart.

Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Prairie Energy Cooperative both secured REDL&G funds to support a $7.4 million renovation project to the Hancock County Health System (HCHS) at their campus in Britt. The project will allow HCHS to relocate and expand Surgical Services to house two major operating rooms, two procedure rooms, and four same-day surgery rooms. The Emergency Department will also expand to two trauma rooms, four private exam rooms, a centralized nursing station, and decontamination room. Other improvements include the construction of a new front door/canopy, remodeling of the main atrium lobby area, and relocation of the Senior Life Solution (outpatient program) to first floor, allowing for easier access.

Construction is underway with a projected completion date of late 2020. It is expected that these improvements will result in the creation of 14 new jobs over the next three years.

Utility: Corn Belt Power Cooperative
REDL: $640,000
Utility: Prairie Energy Cooperative
REDG: $300,000 Award to enhance RLF
Match: $60,000 from Prairie Energy Cooperative

Hometown Dental, Inc. received support from Butler County REC for the acquisition of an existing dental practice in Charles City. Dr. Reed Faldet purchased the dental practice from Dr. Stephen Earney, who provided dental care to the community for over 35 years. The practice was renamed and began operation as Hometown Dental on July 1, 2019. Through the addition of another treatment room, additional staff and utilizing the newest technology, Dr. Faldet expects to increase his capacity to serve an estimated 480 additional patient visits per year.

Dr. Faldet is a 2019 graduate of the University of Iowa Dental School. Doctors Faldet and Earney met in the summer of 2018, preceding Reed Faldet's final year of dental school. They mapped out the succession plan to transition the practice to Hometown Dental when Dr. Faldet received his DDS in June 2019. Congratulations to both doctors for the continued care provided to the citizens of Charles City, Floyd County, and the surrounding area.

Utility: Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative
REDG: $258,333 Award to enhance RFL
Match: $51,667 from Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

East Central Iowa REC provided a loan to support the construction of a new dental clinic in Dysart. Pipho & Gingrich Family Dentistry is constructing a new facility adjacent to their current dental clinic. This 2,100 sq. ft. dental clinic will include five treatment rooms, a large patient waiting room, front office space, three restrooms, imaging room, doctor's office, and employee lounge. The new location has an on-site parking lot providing much easier access for patients.

Dr. Robert Pipho purchased McLaughlin Family Dentistry in Dysart in 2015. He formed a partnership with Dr. Sarah Gingrich in 2017. Construction on the new facility is underway. Both dentists are excited at the prospect of expanding and upgrading the services they provide to the surrounding community.

Utility: East-Central Iowa REC
REDG: $480,000

USDA Rural Development Tours Iowa Projects

Ten staff from USDA Rural Development's Deputy Chief Finance Office in Washington D.C. recently joined State Director Grant Menke on a four-day tour of rural Iowa. The delegation visited 20 USDA Rural Development-funded projects in 14 rural Iowa communities.

The Deputy Chief Finance Office develops and estimates budgetary requirements for USDA Rural Development loan and grant programs and administrative expenses. Staff in the office also play a key role in setting subsidy rates for many USDA Rural Development programs.

The tour included many stops at REDL&G projects assisted by rural electric and telephone cooperatives. Project visits included the John Wayne Birthplace & Museum in Winterset and downtown Winterset (Farmers Electric Cooperative Inc.), the Stanton Viking Center and downtown Stanton (Farmers Mutual Telephone Company), Monroe County Hospital in Albia (Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative), RELCO Locomotives in Albia (Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative), Inspire U Bake Shoppe in Albia (Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative), RMA Armament in Centerville (Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative), Sully Locker and Market in Sully (Pella Cooperative Electric Association and Central Iowa Power Cooperative) and the Perry Police Department (Minburn Communications).
Empower Rural Iowa Embarks on Year Two

Much has been accomplished in the year since Governor Reynolds signed an Executive Order establishing the Empower Rural Iowa Initiative. Three task forces were immediately established focused on the areas of connecting, growing, and investing in rural Iowa communities. These task forces made numerous recommendations, some of which could be accomplished by the Executive branch, and other programs and policies required action of the General Assembly. As for the legislative recommendations of the task forces, it was noteworthy that the legislature passed the Empower Rural Iowa Act unanimously.

Among an early list of accomplishments was the establishment of an Office of Rural Revitalization, increased funding for rural broadband, several rural housing incentives, and a grant program for innovative and replicable initiatives to foster rural vitality. It is not surprising that the work and early success of the Empower Rural Iowa Initiative is garnering the attention of other states.

The vision for the second year of Empower Rural Iowa was initiated with all three task forces convening at the State Fair. Meetings and research will continue throughout the fall as more actions and recommendations are prepared for the 2020 General Assembly. (The above pictures were taken at meetings hosted by Manning and South Slope Cooperative Communications.)

Pocket Neighborhood Breaks Ground in Maquoketa

Congratulations to the community of Maquoketa on the groundbreaking for the 10-house Bear River Cottages community. This pocket neighborhood will feature ten new 1,064-sq. ft. homes priced at less than $150,000 each. The pocket neighborhood concept features clusters of homes gathered around a landscaped common area with recreational amenities, creating a neighborhood setting and facilitating daily interaction with shared outdoor common space. The pocket neighborhood appeals to multiple buyers including seniors wanting to downsize, young families, and single professionals. ECDC, a nonprofit subsidiary of East Central Intergovernmental Association, ECIA is the developer for the project and is also offering each buyer $10,000 in down payment assistance.

The mission of the IADG Community Foundation is to foster economic development and community betterment by providing research and promotion, education and training, and community-based and guided philanthropy. For more information, visit IADG.com/foundation.

Hinterland Dairy Opens for Business

Hinterland Dairy, owned by Ralph and Colleen Krogmeier, held an open house in early August to celebrate the opening of their new cheese processing and retail business. Hinterland is a European term describing “land that is off from what is typically visible.” This describes the 400-acre dairy farm the Krogmeier’s operate, which is nestled between Fort Madison and Donnellson, Iowa. Currently, fresh cheese curds are produced two or three times per week in the facility then sold locally on-site or at HyVee in Fort Madison, and other farms, orchards and farmers’ markets in the area. See more at hinterlanddairy.com

Access Energy Cooperative assisted with the project by providing financing through the Cooperative’s revolving loan fund program. Access Energy provides electric power and economic development support to Hinterland Dairy and the Krogmeier’s farm.
The Forge Offers Unique Tech Opportunities in Jefferson

Congratulations to Jefferson and Greene County. This first rural Forge is a tech training center designed to help grow and retain tech talent in rural Iowa. The opening of Jefferson's Forge is a key part of an even larger effort to bring tech jobs to Greene County.

In addition to opening the Forge, Pillar Technology will be launching The Forge Academy, a software development training program in collaboration with Greene County Community School District and local community colleges. Students will receive four months of tuition-free software development training provided by Accenture and designed to prepare rural area students for high-demand, software development jobs in Iowa.

Corteva Agriscience has committed to support 25 scholarships for the Forge Academy, as well as create two-way learning and mentoring opportunities for rural Forge students and Corteva's IT/software employees. Corteva will also formalize an IT Internship program that will support the academy.

Among supporters for this incredible effort is Midland Power Cooperative who provided a $600,000 loan secured through the USDA REDL&G program and $325,000 from their RLF. Congratulations to Jefferson and Greene County.

IADG Energy Bank Supports Paullina Project

The IADG Energy Bank approved a loan for Prairie Market, a family-owned grocery store in Paullina, IA, to replace the refrigeration cases and compressor system. Don and Laura Palmer purchased the store in 2015. The equipment in the store was 45 years old and in frequent need of repair. Upgrading the refrigeration cases will result in considerable energy efficiency, savings, and a significant reduction in food spoilage. The new energy efficient food cases were supplied by Hill Phoenix of Keosauqua, Iowa.

The IADG Energy Bank Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) is focused on making loans to businesses and industries for qualifying energy efficiency projects within the State. Preference is given to manufacturers. Loan amounts range from $50,000 - $300,000. For more information, visit IADG.com/EnergyBank.

Corning Breaks Ground for New Hotel

Corning Hotel, LLC broke ground Monday, August 12. Several years were invested in looking at the feasibility and determining the best location for the project. Forty-six individuals or entities, most of them either local or with a tie to the community, invested in the project. The 33 room, 2-story hotel will include two extended-stay rooms with kitchenettes, a double king suite, and various king and queen rooms. The Corning Hotel is expected to open the Summer of 2020.

While the smallest county by population in Iowa, this community has significant offerings. Not only is it known as an award-winning National Main Street Community, it is on the National Register of Historic Places as a Commercial Historic District, is a Preserve America Community and is one of Iowa’s Great Places. The new hotel will open up opportunities for more people to experience Corning, and the surrounding area.

Groundbreaking for TrinityRail Maintenance Facility

TrinityRail Maintenance Services has broken ground for a 350,000 sq. ft. facility in the 230-acre Butler Logistics Park near Shell Rock. The company expects that when construction is complete by the end of 2020, they will have employment opportunities for 250 people. The facility’s employees will provide repair, maintenance, and modifications to rail cars. Butler County REC supplies power to the Butler Logistics Park and also provided a $2 million loan to Iowa Northern Railway to support necessary upgrades to the Butler Logistic Park.

WeLead Business and Workforce Attraction Grant

Liberty Communications is the recipient of a $2,500 Ripple Effect planning grant for the creation of high-quality promotional materials including drone and video for the attraction of businesses and workforce to West Liberty. WeLead (West Liberty Economic Area Development) will use the grant proceeds along with the “Together - We Grow,” a program developed for creative storytelling, to showcase community assets and quality of life perspectives. The proposed program will launch in late 2019 or early 2020. The application was made to Aureon by Liberty Communications, a full-service telecommunications provider, on behalf of WeLead. Liberty Communications will match the Aureon grant to make a total of $5,000 available for the project.

IADG is proud to extend the Ripple Effect Program and important partnership with Aureon, which provides significant technical assistance and financial support for community planning grants and loan assistance to businesses. To learn more about Ripple Effect, visit RippleEffectWorks.org or contact Brittany Wirtz at bwirtz@iadg.com.
Brittany...Same Person New Name

Congratulations to Brittany Wirtz and Marlon Morales as they were married on October 5. Brittany is IADG’s V.P. of Community Initiatives, including our partnership with Aureon and the network of 120 independent telecommunications companies in Iowa. For those communicating with Brittany be watching for the transition to Brittany Morales.

Snyder Accepts Board Positions

Kay Snyder has been elected to a three-year term on the Professional Developers (PDI) board of directors. PDI is an organization of economic development professionals working to grow and develop Iowa’s economic base.

Snyder has also been elected to the Vice Chair position of the Leadership Iowa Board of Directors. Leadership Iowa is Iowa’s premier statewide awareness program that strives to educate, inspire and grow a network of informed leaders and to encourage their ongoing local and statewide involvement to create a better future for Iowans.

As a part of these new responsibilities, Snyder will join the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) Foundation Board. The Foundation is committed to providing statewide education programs to students, employees and businesses to develop community leaders and strengthen Iowa’s workforce. The ABI Foundation’s programs include Business Horizons, Leadership Iowa University and Leadership Iowa.

Rural Housing 360 Launches in Rural Iowa

Workforce and housing are two issues impacting growth in many communities. Jobs are plentiful across Iowa, but lack of housing and long commute distances make it difficult for employers to recruit and retain workers. Rural Housing 360 is an initiative focused on helping workers secure financing for homes and placing them in communities where they work and desire to live.

Iowa has been in a housing crisis for years. Many Iowa towns have not had a new home built in decades. Drive across Iowa’s highways and byways, and you will also see empty acreages. Rural Housing 360 is working to counter this trend and the lack of workforce housing in rural Iowa. Steve Gilbert launched Rural Housing 360 earlier this year and is gaining traction across the state. Over 12 new modular homes will be placed in Lenox, New Market, Wilton, Hamburg, and other communities this fall. More communities and houses are in the pipeline for 2020. Visit www.ruralhousing360.com for more information.

Mark Your Calendar and Identify Your Team

Sponsored by the Iowa Rural Development Council (IRDC), the Iowa Rural Summit is back for the fourth time in 2020. With a growing number of IRDC partners and increasing community participation, the Summit has outgrown its previous venues in Jefferson and Grinnell.

This year the Summit moves to the campus of Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids. The IRDC Executive Committee is already at work identifying cutting edge speakers, gathering best practices, and formulating an agenda that won’t disappoint.

The Summit will once again focus on mobilizing community teams for planning, action, and implementation. Whether your community is struggling to get organized, gaining traction, or celebrating recent successes, the Summit is the place to get inspiration, ideas, and information.

Start planning and mobilizing your community teams and save the dates of April 29, 30 and May 1. Details will follow on the IRDC website as the 2020 Summit forges ahead with your input and participation.

IADG and Partners Market Iowa to Baking Industry Leaders

Representatives from Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative joined IADG at the International Baking Industry Exposition (IBIE) in Las Vegas in early September. IBIE is the global grain-based food industry’s largest trade event in the Western Hemisphere. Every three years, the industry gathers to conduct face-to-face meetings, showcase the newest innovations, participate in cutting-edge conference sessions and demos, and build relationships at high-level networking events. Iowa made and renewed important industry connections at the event.