# 2010 Annual Report

Upper Minnesota Valley
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

# Message
## from the Chair

The time has come to say good bye as Chairman of the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission. It has been a great experience and I believe that it has been a successful four years. To this end I can only say "Thank You" to all those who made it possible. The Commission board members have continually led through their examples. The discussions that we have had at the board level were invaluable in creating and carrying out our mission. I am still amazed at the passion commission members voiced for the region. The RDC mission truly reflects what we are all about.

I want to express a heartfelt appreciation for the staff and what they have accomplished over the past years. The staff has been very creative, thoughtful, energetic, and willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Starting from Dawn as the director, all through the organization I am very thankful to have known and worked with you all.

My concluding thoughts for the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission can be best summed up in the lyrics from John Lennon in the song *Instant Karma*: may "we all shine on, like the moon and the stars and the sun." With determination, creativity, and investment I believe our region will shine on.

Thanks.

Gary Hendricks

# Mission

# Message
## from the Executive Director

"I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing so until the end." - Abraham Lincoln

What are we best at? This is the question our staff and board spent some time talking about this last year as part of our strategic planning process. UMVRDC staff can easily share a list of successful projects that we worked on in the last year: writing an energy grant for a new Lac qui Parle County Courthouse boiler; another grant for home and business owners to make improvements to their property in the City of Appleton; submitting the Yellow Medicine County Hazard Mitigation plan to the state and federal government and receiving accolades on its thoroughness and preciseness; being asked to continue our grant management contracts with Granite Falls and Browns Valley to continue to assist them with their flood recovery efforts; writing two grants to the Minnesota Historical Society for Minnesota Legacy funding for interpretive signs along the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway. Throughout this annual report you will see a variety of other success stories that document what we are best at. After reviewing all the examples you will see that what we are best at is helping units of government in this region find resources and implement projects.

As we examined our accomplishments we also talked about things to improve. We had conversations about how to reach out and help more communities in the region. As a result we are attending more city councils, engaging our board members in more direct conversations about what is happening in their communities, reading all local newspapers and discussing opportunities for us to follow up with more information or solutions to community issues, and surveying elected officials on what their needs are. We believe that the more we know about what our communities want, the better we can serve them. In fact, we want to be the best at serving them in a professional, cost effective way.

I hope that you can read this annual report and be inspired by some of the community projects taking place in this region. Throughout the last year we have actively been assisting a lot of dedicated elected officials who are working on solutions for their communities.

Enable the region to thrive
through assisting local governments

# Board of Directors

## Big Stone County

Brent Olson
*County Board*

Craig Randleman
*Municipalities*

Harold R. Dimberg
*Townships*

## Chippewa County

Jim Dahlvang
*County Board*

Nancy Strand
*Municipalities*

David VanKlompenburg
*Townships*

## Lac qui Parle County

Harold Solem
*County Board*

Jeff Olson
*Municipalities*

Tim Patzer
*Townships*

## Swift County

Gary Hendrickx
*County Board*

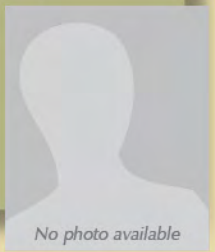
Ron Ronning
*Municipalities*

Warren Rau
*Townships*

## Yellow Medicine County

Gary L. Johnson
*County Board*

Scott Peterson
*Municipalities*




Mitch Kling
*Townships*

## Public Interest & Tribal Council

Juanita Lauritsen
*Work Force Council*

Pamela Lehmann
*Lac qui Parle County EDA*

Bruce Swigerd
*Prairie Five CAC, Inc.*

N. Scott Larsen
*Upper Sioux Community*

## School Board

Brett Buer
*Dawson-Boyd*

Kimberly Mitchell
*Lac qui Parle Valley*

# Staff

*Back*

Jenifer Fadness
*Communications Planner Assistant*

Jen Remboldt
*Administrative Assistant*

Jacki Anderson
*Community Development Senior Planner*

Michelle Bouta
*Community Development Planner*

Arlene Tilbury
*Financial Director*

*Front*

Kristi Fernholz
*Tourism Senior Planner*

Dawn Hegland
*Executive Director*

Katie Meyer
*Community Development Planner*

Barb Jordahl
*Financial Planner*

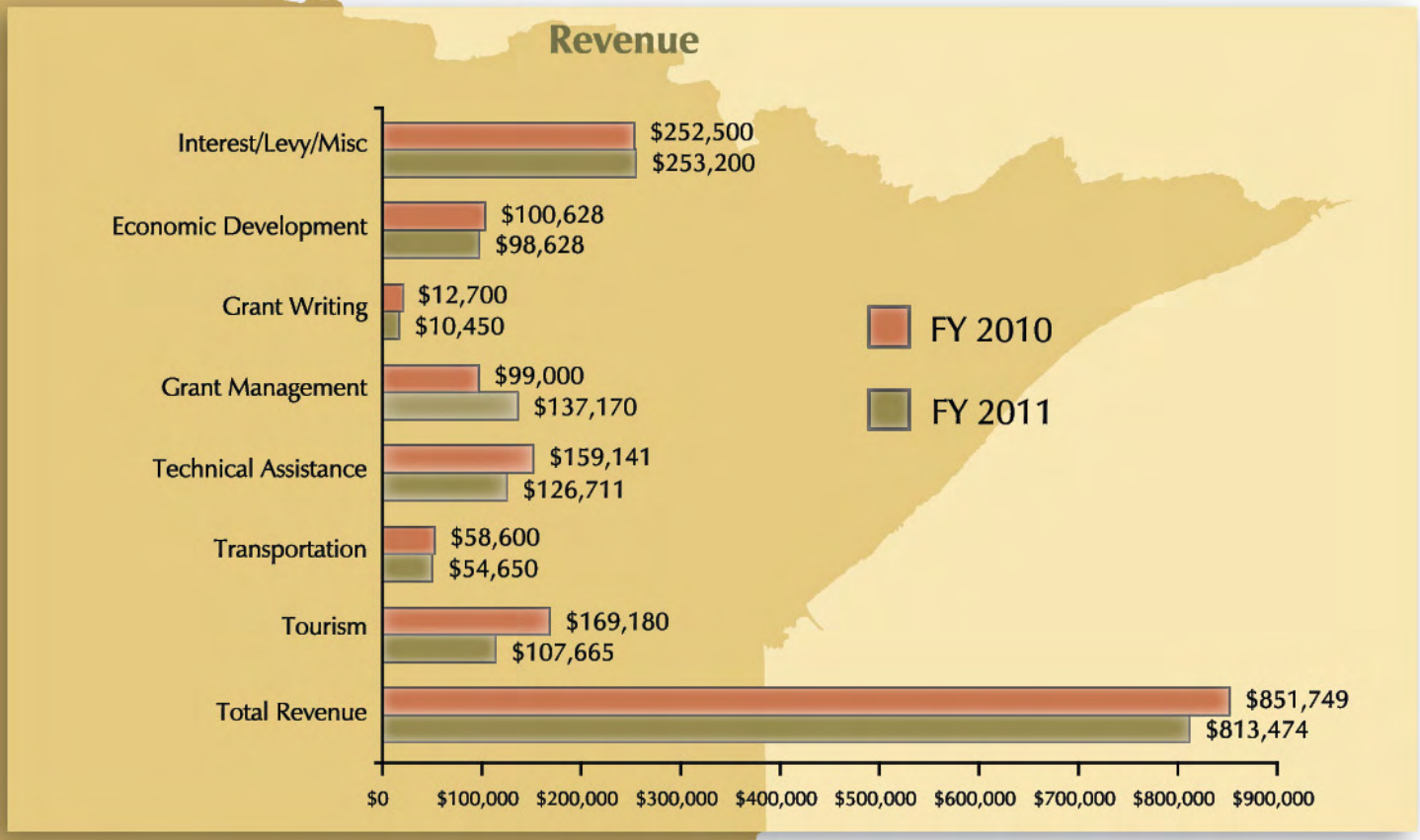
Serving the 5 counties,
37 communities,
1 tribal nation,
94 townships, and
10 school districts
in the Upper Minnesota River Valley

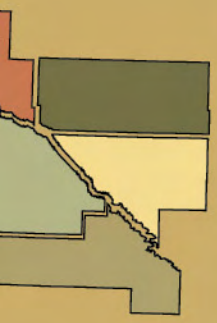
The amount of money invested in our region as a result of the UMVRDC's work:

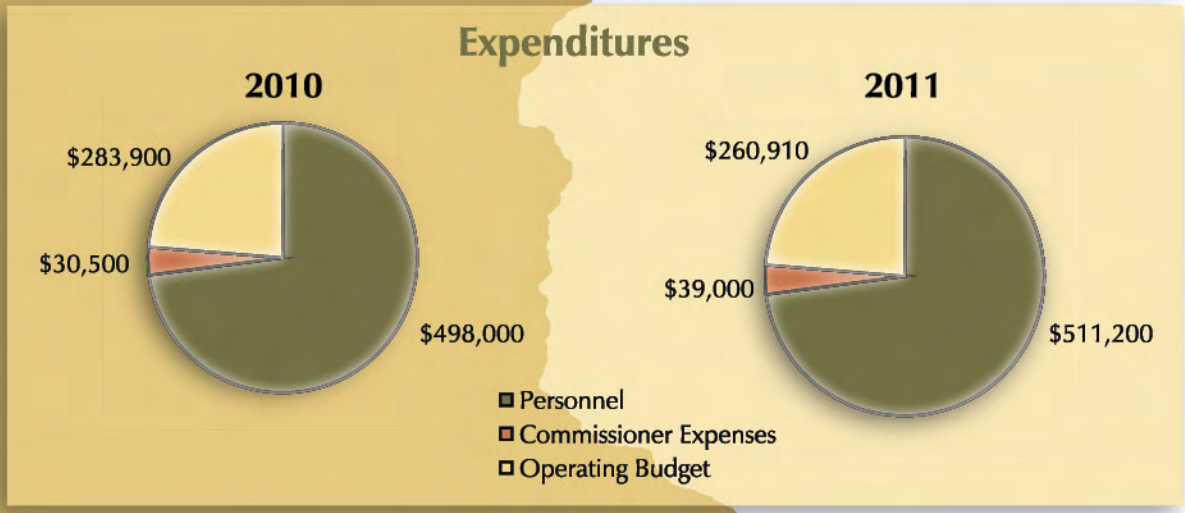
**$1,757,600**

# Financial Report

Revenue and Expenditure Comparison
Current FY 2010 and Proposed FY 2011






**2010**
Total Revenue: $851,749
Total Expenditures: $827,500
Excess Revenue: $24,249

**2011 Proposed Budget**
Total Revenue: $813,474
Total Expenditures: $811,110
Excess Revenue: $2,364

# The UMVRDC's Good to Great Process

The UMVRDC continues to implement our **Good to Great** strategic planning process that is defining the future for the agency. The goal of this plan is to position the UMVRDC to best meet the needs of the local units of government it was created to serve. In the last year we worked with 16 different units of government in the region to write grants, manage projects, or complete other planning services.

Our strategic plan is based on Jim Collins' book *Good to Great*. We have spent the last five years focusing on moving our organization from good to great by examining our organizational values, what we are passionate about, what we can be best at, and what drives our resource engine.

In 2010 the UMVRDC reviewed what we have done over the last five years and renewed our strategic plan using *Good to Great* as a framework. Based on these ideas, we have developed the three **Hedgehog Concepts** and our **BHAGs (Big Huge Audacious Goals)** shown on these pages.

The following lists were compiled from our 2010 strategic planning sessions. The statements in bold are those that staff agreed were the most important in answering each question.

## What Can We Be Best At?

**Matching local needs with information and funding to accomplish projects.**

- Responding to community/regional needs
- Connecting communities with technical and financial resources
- Subject matter experts on planning, economic development, tourism, hazard mitigation, etc.
- Management of grants/programs
- Navigating state and federal regulations by acting as liaison
- Finding $ for projects
- Blending local and technical know-how
- Using our wide range of experience and networks to find solutions
- Knowing our region and having a vested interest in it
- Working with multiple jurisdictions
- Managing time consuming projects that require good planning and bridging resources
- Grant writing
- Unbiased, results-based solutions

## UMVRDC Mission

**Enable the region to thrive through assisting local units of government.**

## What Are We Deeply Passionate About?

**Solutions consistent with the values in Region 6W.**

- The rural quality of life
- Helping communities not only survive, but prosper
- Making the region a great place to live, work and play
- Assisting local units of government to address issues such as planning, zoning, technology, transportation, development, and tourism
- Acting as liaisons with local/state/federal agencies
- Implementing complicated projects
- Learning from the past and applying in the present to prepare for the future
- Getting results
- Superior service
- Desire to produce quality product
- Solutions that fit region's real needs and way of life

## What Drives Our Resource Engine?

**Excellent results at a reasonable price.**

- Providing excellent service at reasonable cost
- Successfully completing projects with tangible results
- Responsive, knowledgeable service
- Talented staff with a wide range of expertise
- Local contracts
- Levy
- Knowing our communities and their leaders

## The Hedgehog Concept

The Hedgehog Concept is an operating model that reflects a deep understanding of three intersecting circles: 1) what you can be the best in the world at, 2) what you are deeply passionate about, and 3) what best drives your economic or resource engine.

# Communities Prosper

## Big Huge Audacious Goals

"A **Big Huge Audacious Goal (BHAG)** is action-oriented; clear (who, what, where, by when); compelling and gripping—people "get it" right away; bold; bordering on hubris and the unattainable. It is a 10- to 30-year objective—like a big mountain to climb—that serves as a unifying focal point of effort, galvanizing people and creating team spirit. It is crisp, compelling and easy to understand." (Good to Great, Collins, 2001)

## BHAG Accomplishments in 2010

### BHAG #1: Be the premier agency for community development in Region 6W.

- UMVRDC staff implemented 17 contracts in Benson, Granite Falls, Clarkfield, Maynard, Clara City, Appleton, Browns Valley, Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties and the Upper Sioux Community.
- Sent numerous email blasts about upcoming opportunities and events.
- Staff coordinated quarterly meetings for the Economic Development Professionals. Meetings and business tours were held in Montevideo, Granite Falls, Dawson and Canby.
- Participated on the Clean Energy Resource Team (CERTs).
- Coordinated a Rural Lender Roundtable in March 2010 with over 15 banking and economic development professionals in attendance.
- Coordinated a Housing Workshop in April 2010 to provide resources for communities to improve dilapidated housing and deal with foreclosure and rental challenges.
- Participated on Area Transportation Partnership 4 & 8.
- Hosted free entrepreneur classes once a month.

### BHAG #2: Implement regional approaches to address needs in Region 6W.

- Received technical assistance from the EDA University Center in Crookston, MN to help with the organization and launch of a regional recruitment initiative.
- The UMVRDC region was selected as a Minnesota Rural Intelligent Community (MIRC) demonstration region that will provide up to $100,000 for regional broadband projects over the next two fiscal years.
- Sustained Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Provided staff for the Meander Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl.
- Provided staff for the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.

### BHAG #3: The RDC name will be as recognizable as the "golden arches" by communities in Region 6W.

- Created new RDC website that reflects our current branding.
- Visited all Region 6W communities in FY10 and handed out new marketing packets.
- Continued to make all marketing efforts consistent with RDC branding.
- Sent at least 40 email blasts and at least 20 press releases.

### BHAG #4: Have 100% active participation of the UMVRDC Board.

- Updated board orientation packet and met with one new board member.
- BHAG committees met 3-6 times throughout the year prior to Commission meetings to discuss ideas and progress on goals. BHAG committee members reported on their discussion at RDC meetings.
- Continued to implement the round robin at Commission meetings to share issues and projects from their board. Planning staff meets the next day to review discussion and find areas to follow up on.
- Had several presentations under the discussion portion of the agenda on special topics: Steve Gasser from Vivid Image discussed social media, October 2009; MnDOT District staff and county engineers shared transportation projects, November 2009; Center for Rural Policy and Ortonville Media Center, February 2010.
- Utilized the Planner Update in the monthly board packet as summary of staff activities to inform and educate board members about the services and projects of the UMVRDC. Board members are asked to share this update with their councils/boards.
- Implemented a board retreat on April 27 with Andrea Fox Jensen. RDC strategies based on the Jim Collin's book *Good to Great* were reviewed and updated.
- Surveyed Commission members quarterly about content, effectiveness and processes of monthly board meetings.
- Featured Commission members in each of the quarterly newsletters.

## UMVRDC Core Values

- Strong board stewardship
- Staff is accountable to and driven by the Board and the units of government in this region
- Agency's role is to assist, guide and facilitate projects and programs for units of government in this region
- Respectful, open and transparent
- Integrity
- Progressive thought and action
- Value all of our communities
- Excellent customer service
- Strive for excellence in work and products
- Collaboration and cooperation
- Value the region's lifestyle and all it has to offer
- Pride in the agency's abilities and capabilities

# Grant Writing

## Lac qui Parle Office of Energy Security Grants

Michelle and Jacki worked with Lac qui Parle County to obtain a $20,000 grant from the Minnesota Office of Energy Security (OES) to rehabilitate an aging boiler in summer 2010 through the Facility Cost-share Grant Program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The primary factors considered in assessing their applications were the amount of energy saved and labor hours paid relative to grant funds requested. Other potential courthouse projects were considered but the simple payback did not meet the criteria required within the guidelines.

Included as part of the requirement of the proposal was use of the Minnesota State Building Benchmarking system (B3). B3 Benchmarking is a building energy management system for public buildings in Minnesota including state, local government, and public school buildings. It is a very useful tool to help manage your buildings, improve your building portfolio efficiently, and monitor the improvements.

Currently, Michelle and Katie are working again with Lac qui Parle County on another grant application with OES to receive dollars to install geothermal heating and cooling pumps for the County Courthouse.

## Maynard and Granite Falls Fire Station Grants

Michelle assisted Maynard and Granite Falls in applying for ARRA funding for fire stations. Final word was received in April 2010 that neither were funded. No funding was received in Minnesota for the nationally competitive fire station grants. It is not anticipated there will be a fire station grant round in 2010.

## Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Grant Writing

**Appleton** – Jacki applied for 15 owner-occupied residential units and 10 commercial units to be rehabilitated through the SCDP program for the city of Appleton. The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) approved the grant application and work will begin late summer 2010 on the rehabilitation projects.

**Barry** – Michelle provided assistance to the Big Stone County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to complete a full SCDP application for the rehabilitation of individual septic systems of ten owner-occupied homes in the city of Barry. This application was not approved. Michelle found out what could be changed in the future to make the application more competitive and is working with the HRA to submit a new application.

# Grant Management

## Granite Falls Flood Recovery

As a result of the floods of 1997 and 2001, Granite Falls implemented a flood migration plan to relocate residential and commercial buildings out of the 100 year flood plain. This spring, flood damage was controlled because of completed and in progress flood mitigation projects, and the city received an additional $1,000,000 from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for ongoing flood mitigation needs. Arlene and Barb continue to provide fiscal and advisory services to the City of Granite Falls.

*Flooding in Granite Falls*

## Browns Valley Flood Recovery

This spring the Browns Valley Diversion Project, though not completed, still proved successful after workers managed to plug a portion of the new diversion channel that was washed away by flood waters. The Upper Minnesota River Watershed District is working with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State of Minnesota to obtain reimbursement for damages caused by 2010 flooding. The Diversion Project is anticipated to be completed this year. Arlene and Barb continue to provide fiscal and advisory services to the City of Browns Valley in their recovery efforts.

## Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Grant Management

UMVRDC staff are experts in the fiscal administration and meeting the technical reporting obligations of grants like the Small Cities Development Program. Below is a list of communities we are assisting by managing their grants:

- **NEW! Appleton** – $530,250 for rehabilitation of 15 homes and 10 businesses.
- **Clarkfield/Granite Falls** – $552,500 for rehabilitation of 22 homes, 4 rental properties, and 1 business.
- **Benson** – $464,350 for rehabilitation of 17 homes and 5 businesses.
- **Maynard/Clara City** – $898,180 for 12 homes, 6 businesses, and 1 community center.

# Communities Prosper

## UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund (RDC RLF)

The UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund participated in 8 different projects over the last fiscal year assisting with financing for business start-ups, expansions, and retention projects needing working capital, fixed assets and real estate. A total of $208,500 in revolving loan funds were lent out and helped generate an additional $2,177,136.

Partners in the projects include local banks, the Swift County Rural Development Authority, Clarkfield Economic Development Authority, Prairieland Economic Development Corporation, the Southwest Initiative Foundation and the Appleton Project. Below is a recap of funds approved.

**Honebrink, LLC** located in Swift Falls received $22,500 for real estate, fixtures and equipment of restaurant establishment. Job creation and retention totaled 8 full and part time jobs.

**Appleton Meat Center** received $40,000 for purchase of fixed assets, inventory and working capital. Job creation and retention was 7 full and part time jobs.

**Appleton Power Equipment** received $25,000 for purchase of fixed assets, inventory and working capital. Job creation was 2 full time jobs.

**Appleton Veterinary Clinic** in Appleton received $23,000 for equipment purchases in the newly built vet clinic. Job creation and retention was a combination of 7 full and part time jobs.

**Jimmy's Pizza** of Appleton received $13,000 for fixed assets, inventory and working capital. Job creation was a total of 11 full and part time jobs.

JC & Sons Hardware (known as **Ladner Hardware**) located in Montevideo and Granite Falls received $70,000 for inventory purchases. Job retention was a combination of 13 full and part time jobs.

**Friendship Café** located in Clarkfield received $10,000 for fixtures and equipment. Job creation and retention totaled 5 full and part time jobs.

**I Fit** located in Clarkfield received $5,000 for purchasing equipment. Job creation was 2 part time jobs.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND
A PROGRAM OF THE UPPER MINNESOTA VALLEY REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

*When purchasing the Meat Center, the new owners used RLF funds for new equipment and working capital.*

*The Appleton Veterinary Clinic used RLF funds for equipment in their new building.*

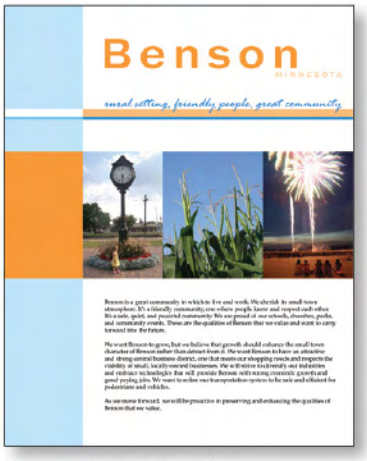
*Jimmy's Pizza of Appleton procured an RLF loan, which in turn created 11 full and part time jobs.*

# Technical Assistance

## Benson Comprehensive Plan Addendum

Jacki and Michelle completed an addendum for the Benson Comprehensive Plan, refreshing the goals and strategies identified in the original plan.

Along with this, a collateral piece was created by Jenifer highlighting Benson's unique attributes and resources available for business and community members. This piece can be used for marketing and/or information for potential businesses or new residents.




*Benson marketing collateral piece*

## County Hazard Mitigation Plans

Katie has been working with all five counties and the Upper Sioux Community to update their All-Hazard Mitigation Plans in order to comply with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that in order for local governments to be eligible for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds, they must update their original plan within five years. The purpose of hazard mitigation planning is to identify strategies to undertake before disasters occur to lessen the magnitude of damage on a community. It is important to incorporate mitigation strategies into everyday planning to make communities safer.

Yellow Medicine County was the first jurisdiction in the five-county region to receive FEMA approval on their All-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Currently, Chippewa County's plan is under FEMA review, while Big Stone County's plan is under review by Minnesota's Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) Department. The Upper Sioux Community's All-Hazard Mitigation Plan is in progress and is set to be completed and receive FEMA approval in August. Katie will continue to coordinate hazard mitigation update activities for Lac qui Parle and Swift Counties throughout the summer and next year.

## Maynard Senior Housing

Michelle conducted a survey as part of a study done to identify interest from the City of Maynard and surrounding residents concerning the topic of senior housing. The survey gauged resident's interest in senior housing, the type of housing, services desired, and to gather other information regarding the Maynard community senior residents. The Maynard City Council was presented with results and they are exploring potential opportunities.

## Swift County Zoning Update

Katie worked with Swift County to update all Swift County Ordinances and focused on streamlining the Zoning Code into the Zoning and Land Regulation Code that encompasses the original zoning and five standalone ordinances (Feedlot, Wind Energy, Adult Use, Manufactured Home Parks, and Public Health Nuisance). The new, workable document contains updated ordinance language, was reorganized, and has standardized formatting. The remaining five ordinances (Food & Beverage, Tobacco, Tattoo Parlors, Solid Waste, and Mini-Truck) have also been reformatted for standardization. Lastly, Katie is working to update Swift County's Zoning Map utilizing Geographic Information Systems.

## Upper Sioux Community Energy Plan

Michelle and Katie are working with the Upper Sioux Community to coordinate an educational panel and discuss wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal opportunities. Guest speakers at the panel will include a variety of representatives from state, federal, and non-profit agencies. Further, UMVRDC staff will coordinate residential and commercial audits in addition to assisting the Upper Sioux Community in developing a Long-Range Energy Plan.

## Energize Appleton

Michelle and Jacki worked as coordinators with the Energize Appleton stewards (a grass roots group of volunteers) to develop citizen-based community goals and strategies for Appleton. The group is currently working on projects in the following areas: City Beautification, Healthy/Active Living, Green Initiatives, Recreation, Communication, and Economic Development. The group has successfully initiated a community recycling day, several business meetings to share local happenings, generated support and interest in a new SCDP application, held several healthy/active living events, and secured a grant to create a trail in Riverside Park.

## City of Graceville Website

Kristi is working with the city of Graceville to develop a new *GovOffice* website. She is taking community photos and working with the city clerk to develop content. The new site will be completed in FY2011.

*The city of Graceville*

# Communities Prosper

## Transportation

### Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan

Michelle and other Regional Development Commissions throughout Minnesota are working to complete a Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan, as required by the state legislature. The plan is due to be completed by February 2011.

Transit provides an invaluable service to seniors, persons with disabilities, and people without cars, among others. Availability of transit also has environmental, health and economic benefits for not only those who use transit, but also for the greater community. Transit service needs are rising, and demographic trends in Greater Minnesota indicate these needs will continue to increase over the next 20 years.

The Plan's project objectives are as follows:

1. To engage and educate stakeholders and the general public about the Plan development.
2. To gather information on transit service and transit investment needs through market research.
3. To identify investment needs required to achieve and satisfy transit goals as established in the 2009 Greater Minnesota Transit Plan.
4. Identify priorities for available funding.
5. Provide a plan for allocating unmet transit service needs at the county level taking into account the diversity of transit systems across Greater Minnesota.
6. Meet the intent of the legislative mandate.

### Area Transportation Partnerships (ATP)

Michelle participated in ATP 4 and ATP 8 meetings to review and rank applications for 2014 federal funds for roads, bridges, trails, public transit, and railroad crossings. The total investment in Region 6W for 2011-2013 is $12,020,716 in federal funds. The totals per county are:

- Big Stone.....$1,179,169
- Chippewa.....$4,093,892
- Lac qui Parle ..... $252,718
- Swift .....$5,179,714
- Yellow Medicine ..... $1,315,223

## Special Regional Projects

### UMVRDC Region Chosen as Demonstration Area for Broadband

At the end of 2010 Dawn and Jacki began work on part of a successful two year $4.7 million federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant awarded to the Blandin Foundation. The UMVRDC was selected as one of 11 demonstration communities in the state to develop projects and strategies to increase broadband utilization in the region.

Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

The project, called Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC), creates a network of state and county agencies, state colleges and universities, rural demonstration communities that will assist in creating technologically and economically vital rural communities that compete and thrive in the broadband economy. MIRC strategies will draw on Intelligent Community Indicators and an array of market development approaches including education, training, technical assistance, and barrier removal.

### Rural Housing Workshop

Jacki worked with the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership to host a Rural Housing Workshop in April 2010. The workshop provided resources for communities to improve dilapidated housing and deal with foreclosure and rental challenges.

Rural Housing Workshop

### Rural Lender Roundtable

In March 2010, Jacki partnered with Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority to coordinate a Rural Lender Roundtable. There were 15 banking and economic development professionals in attendance.

### Regional Recruitment

Get Rural

In 2010, Dawn and Jacki facilitated a group of regional economic development professionals looking for strategies to retain higher skill, higher wage demographics that are contributing to the "brain gain" phenomenon outlined by Ben Winchester at University of Minnesota Extension. His research has shown that those aged 35–45 years are seeking rural lifestyles and bringing education and wealth into this region, despite the significant losses from younger demographics leaving for school, which is commonly referred to as the "brain drain".

The group is investigating Winchester's data on regional in-migration (the "brain gain") and researching and developing strategies to market to those target demographics. The goal is to attract and retain more of the higher skill, higher wage demographics that are already coming to the region on their own. To accomplish this, focus groups with new residents were held throughout the region to understand influential factors in their decision to move to our region. Realtors were also consulted to share their knowledge in working with newcomers.

The end product will be a research paper on our findings and a marketing strategy that will target the "brain gain" demographic and capitalize on the region's competitive strengths. The project is continuing into 2011.

## Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

"The purpose of the Alliance is to encourage economic development through the promotion, preservation, and protection of the intrinsic qualities of the Minnesota River Valley."

The 287-mile Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway is lead by a group of committed individuals representing a variety of interests including Chambers of Commerce, various attractions and historic sites, State Parks, local and state governmental bodies, private businesses, and concerned individuals. UMVRDC continues to provide staffing and fiscal services to the Byway.

Highlights from the past year include:

- Received two grants from the Minnesota Historical Society Historical and Cultural Grant Funds made possible through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. These grants fund the planning and implementation of 10 additional interpretive panels about the US – Dakota War of 1862 along the Minnesota River Valley.
- Administering the website with continual upgrades and improvements such as Google maps.
- Created new Byway removable tattoos used at the Interpretive Panel Kick-off Event.
- The 2009 Familiarization tour was held in New Ulm for over twenty people. A walking tour focused on the US – Dakota War of 1862.
- Staff and Alliance members attended the 2009 National Scenic Byway Conference in Denver, Colorado and were able to participate in many educational sessions.
- Completed one application for federal Byway funding. This application was ranked second by the state committee and if funded will provide funds for staff coordination, a significant marketing campaign for the Byway, and interpretive panel planning. Funding should be announced in the fall of 2010.

- Our biggest highlight for 2009 was the completion of 15 interpretive panels installed along the Byway. Each panel is part of one of the three themes of our Discovery Sites: Struggles for a Home, Food for a Nation, and A River's Legacy. A kick-off event was held at Gilfillan Estate during their Fall Festival. The panels are at the following sites:

**A River's Legacy**

Yellow Medicine Co. Historical Society Museum

Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge

Plover Prairie

Chippewa Prairie

Big Stone Co. Historical Museum

**Struggles for a Home**

Schwandt Memorial

Rudi Memorial

Skallbekken Park

Morton Monuments (2)

Ottawa Village

**Food for A Nation**

R.D. Hubbard House

Enestvedt Seed Company

Gilfillan Estate

Swensson Farm

*Byway Alliance members work on the installation of the Gilfillan Interpretive Panel.*

## Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism

The mission of Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is to promote our area as a great place to visit, live and work, and staff has continued to seek out projects that accomplish that mission.

A few of the highlights from the past year include:

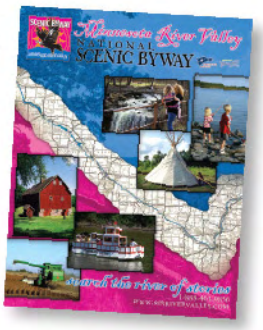
- New Tear Map printed in early 2010, it is a map of our region in a pad form for gas stations, motels, stores, and other businesses to help visitors find their way around the area.

- Managed the toll-free informational phone line: 866-866-5432.
- Received over 2800 requests for information in 2009 and over 2100 in the first half of 2010.
- Continued to explore the use of social media by creating a Facebook Fan page in 2009. We are able to send out Facebook messages to our 263 fans.
- Continued distribution of the Prairie Waters Regional Visitors Guide. This full color, glossy publication is the premier visitors guide for our region with 25,000 copies printed and loads of useful information. A new 2-year guide is under production and will be available summer 2010.
- Prairie Waters website has at least 200,000 hits annually, almost 15,000 unique visitors. New Google maps were added to the site in 2009.

# Communities Prosper

## www.mnrivervalley.com

- A NEW full color Visitors Guide is now available! New improvements include detailed maps denoting Discovery Sites and GPS coordinates for those interested in geocaching.




- Distributed over 6,000 of our Byway Guides including distribution at the Mall of America, at Travel Information Centers on the state's southern borders, fulfilling visitor requests, and to Byway businesses and attractions.

*The children in attendance at the Gilfillan kickoff event had a great time getting Byway temporary tattoos.*

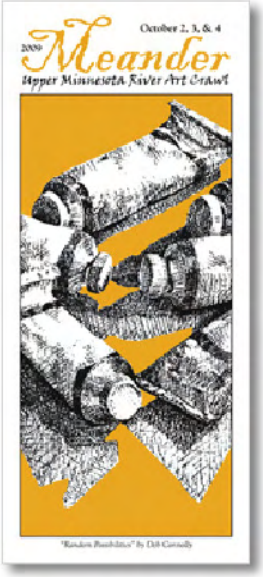
## www.prairiewaters.com
## 866.866.5432

Find us on Facebook

- Held a Prairie Waters Video Contest in 2009 in conjunction with our Annual Gathering. The video contest was a great success. The Annual Gathering was held in Benson. We served local foods and showed the video submissions.
- Wrote a successful grant to Explore Minnesota Tourism procuring more than $10,000 for advertising in our region.
- Created and placed numerous ads in our regional papers, statewide, and in out-of-state publications such as Midwest Living, AAA, and South Dakota Magazine.

## Meander Art Crawl

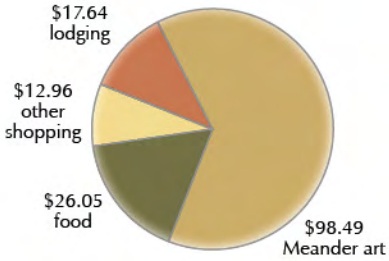
The UMVRDC helped coordinate planning, managed finances, and developed and implemented marketing for the 6th annual Meander in October 2009. Forty-five local artists participated.



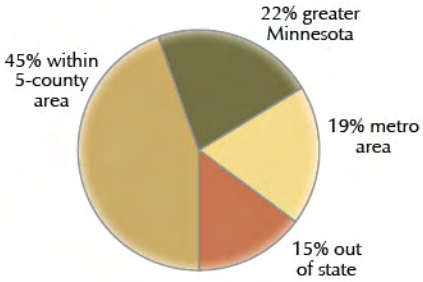

### 2009 Meander Economic Impacts

- **$66,931.00** in Meander art sales was reported by artists during the Meander weekend, *an increase of 17% from the previous year.*
- The average art sales per artist was **$1,560**, *an increase of 3% from the previous year.*
- **85%** of the money raised to organize the Meander through sponsors and artists was spent on products or services (printing, paper, advertising, graphic design, staffing) in the five county area.
- Customers visited an average of **12 studios** over the weekend.
- **76%** of customers said the quality of the art was excellent.
- **78%** of customers said their overall experience was excellent.

**Average Expenditures per Customer: $155.14**




**Where Attendees Came From**



*Katia Andreeva (left) of Granite Falls discusses her watercolor art.*

*Customers (below) enter the studio at Stony Run Woods near Granite Falls, where owners Dale and Jo Pederson make willow furniture.*

*Both photos courtesy of Minnesota Office of Tourism.*

*Meander 2010 is October 1, 2 & 3!*

**www.artsmeander.com**
**866.866.5432**

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# Fact

When a goose gets sick or wounded, two geese drop out of formation and follow their fellow member to help and provide protection. They stay with this member of the flock until it is able to fly again, then they catch up with their flock.

# Lesson

When times are tough, we will stand by one another as the geese do.