

Clean Energy Resource Team

Kristi Fernholz is the new West Central CERT Regional Coordinator. The Clean Energy Resource Team (CERT) has an overall mission to connect individuals and communities with the resources they need to advance clean energy projects across West Central Minnesota.

The responsibility of the WC CERT Regional Coordinator is to work with the entire WC CERT region (17 counties) through a steering committee to advance regional projects, conduct outreach to help connect people in the region to resources and funding sources that advance their clean energy projects. If you have questions on a clean energy project please contact Kristi Fernholz at: Kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org or at 320.289.1981 x 106 or visit www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org.



Small Cities Development Program

Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) applications were submitted on behalf of Benson along with a joint application between Clinton, Beardsley, and Graceville. All communities went through a community survey process which helped them strategically identify project activities. Both identified commercial and homeowner rehabilitation as community priorities which were supported with strong survey responses from interested businesses and homeowners. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development will be reviewing applications this spring with award announcements anticipated in early summer 2016.

The UMVRDC is currently overseeing the administration of SCDP grants in Clara City and Appleton. The SCDP program is a great opportunity for communities to offer owner-occupied, rental and commercial rehabilitation grants and low interest loans to community members. For more information about SCDP please contact Jacki Anderson at jacki.anderson@umvrdc.org.

Now Available!

The new 2016 Local Shops Guide is now available in print and online! The Local Shops Guide includes antique shops, local shops, dining, and lodging throughout the counties of Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine. To order free copies of the guide, email Melissa@umvrdc.org. You can also find an online version of the guide at www.Prairiewaters.com. If you would like to add the online version to your website, email Melissa and she will get you started!



The 2016 Explore Southern Minnesota Tourism Guide is also available. The guide is distributed to over 200,000 people throughout the year. The Prairie Waters region is showcased with a full page advertisement and has several assets listed as top attractions in Southern Minnesota. Contact Melissa if you are interested in ordering free copies of the guide.

Mark Your Calendar!

March 25, 2016 UMVRDC Office closed - Good Friday	April 26, 2016 UMVRDC Board Meeting 6:30pm www.umvrdc.org	May 24, 2016 UMVRDC Board Meeting 6:30pm www.umvrdc.org	May 30, 2016 UMVRDC Office closed - Memorial Day	May 31, 2016 Transportation Open House 4-6pm www.umvrdc.org	June 28, 2016 UMVRDC Board Meeting 6:30pm www.umvrdc.org
Appleton, MN	Appleton, MN	Appleton, MN	Appleton, MN	Appleton, MN	Appleton, MN



[Facebook.com/UMVRDC](https://www.facebook.com/UMVRDC)

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Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**



Helping Communities Prosper

Serving the
Big Stone, Chippewa,
Lac qui Parle, Swift
and Yellow Medicine
County Region

Regional Outlook

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Get Rural

For a number of years, the UMVRDC has been convening a group of regional economic development professionals to research strategies to attract residents to the region. University of MN research has shown that those in the age range of 35 - 45 years are seeking out 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 UMVRDC has recently received funding through the Blandin Foundation to move forward with these efforts and branding the region. Attendees from all across the region including Chambers, EDA professionals, and City staff joined the UMVRDC on March 17th to welcome guest speaker Christie Dick, Freelance Management Consultant, and founder of Alberta, Canada's "Return 2 Rural" (R2R).

Christie explained how she strategically brought together nine small communities to create a regional brand by connecting young people with rural work, life, and business opportunities. Below are just a few examples of how Alberta, Canada's Return to Rural became a success.

R2R Recipe for Success

- Rural high-speed internet and advances in technology accessibility (starting to level the playing field - education, ecommerce, tele-work)
- A growing favorable perception of rural living
- A shift in social and economic culture (social media & access to market)

Bringing the Message & Brand to Life

Projects sparked by the R2R initiative include:

- Invest in Rural Here** - actively recruiting young entrepreneurs
- #workwednesday** - connects job seekers and employers on Facebook & Twitter
- Next Leaders** - engages leaders in rebuilding Rural
- Capital R for Rural** - the celebration of Rural everywhere

For Christie's full presentation visit UMVRDC.org/regionalrecruitment.

Get Rural continued inside...



Chamber, EDAs, and City attendees listen to Christie Dick's Return 2 Rural success story.

Get Rural

(continued from front page)

UMVRDC staff have coined this effort “Regional Recruitment” and defined three phases: education and research (nearly complete), mobilization of resources (in-progress), and implementation and marketing (in-progress). Completed research includes:

- Mail surveys and focus groups with new residents in the region to understand influential factors in their decision to move to our region
- An analysis of the online presence of businesses and community assets in all 37 cities in the region.
- A report called “Regional Recruitment: Strategies to Attract and Retain Newcomers” which can be found on the UMVRDC website

For more information on completed research visit umvrdc.org/regionalrecruitment.

Get Rural Visitor for the Day Campaign!

The UMVRDC highly encourages Chambers, EDAs, City/County staff to participate in a “Visitor of the Day” campaign. Participate by giving a tour of your community’s unique assets, events, and lifestyle through the lens of a Go-Pro or smart phone. UMVRDC staff will use the footage to develop a short video clip that can be used for online marketing of the region. We will start collecting footage at the end of March and continue through the spring. For more details on the meeting or questions regarding the Visitor of the Day Campaign please visit www.umvrdc.org/events or contact Melissa at melissa@umvrdc.org or Jacki at jacki.anderson@umvrdc.org.

Granite Falls Memorial Park Funding

The City of Granite Falls announced in February that they received a grant through the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC). The funding request of \$51,200 was approved by the legislature and will address specific issues identified in the Master Plan including invasive species management, concept drawings, survey work and signage. The UMVRDC facilitated the Memorial Park Master Plan and wrote the funding request to the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission.

In 2014, Memorial Park successfully achieved the important Regionally Significant Designation required to apply for grant funding. The regionally significant endorsement is the first step in securing funding for park projects.

The GMRPTC was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 2013. This group undertakes system planning and provides recommendations to the legislature for grants funded by the parks and trails fund, to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area for parks and trails of regional significance. For more information on the GMRPTC and the designation and funding process please visit: www.gmrptcommission.org or contact Kristi Fernholz at Kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org or at 320.289.1981 x 106.



Memorial Park,
Granite Falls

2016 Explore MN Tourism Conference



Conference presentation by John Erdman, EMT Director

The Explore Minnesota Tourism (EMT) Conference was held February 2-3 at the Bemidji Sanford Center. Hundreds of business owners, chamber members, city staff, county commissioners, and other guests gathered to share and learn the latest marketing trends. This year’s speakers, engaging breakout sessions, and networking opportunities were designed to inspire and equip attendees with tools and tactics to market Minnesota as a premier travel destination. For more information on the topics and guest speakers visit www.exploreminnesota.com.

Economic Impacts of Tourism in Minnesota

EXPLORE **mn** MINNESOTA

- Travelers in Minnesota spend more than \$37 million per day
- Sales at leisure and hospitality businesses grew 37% from 2004 to 2014, from \$8.7 billion to \$13 billion, including a 5% annual growth in 2014
- Travel & tourism creates jobs and generates sales in every county of Minnesota
- Travel & tourism has a positive economic impact, supporting a wide variety of main street businesses across the state
- Traveler spending indirectly supports jobs in many other industries, as well, from financial services to printing

Economic Impact by County

Counties	Gross Sales	Sales Tax	Private Sector Employees
Big Stone	\$4,521,180	\$326,513	116
Chippewa	\$15,833,603	\$1,107,936	384
Lac qui Parle	\$4,059,040	\$227,276	98
Swift	\$8,939,780	\$523,746	221
Yellow Medicine	\$13,077,134	\$523,746	203
6W Regional Total	\$46,430,737	\$2,827,306	1,022

The Leisure and Hospitality industry consists of Accommodations; Food Services and Drinking Places; and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation. Sources: Minnesota Department of Revenue; Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Property Assessed Clean Energy



Questions? Please contact Kristi Fernholz at kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org or at 320.289.1981 x 106.

Upgrading buildings for energy efficiency and adding renewable energy, like solar panels, just got easier for people in Chippewa County. A new financing tool called Property-Assessed Clean Energy, or PACE, will now help businesses, farms, multi-family housing, nonprofits, and places of worship adopt these energy technologies. PACE provides project financing that is repaid as a separate item on property tax assessments for a set period. In this way, PACE eliminates the burden of upfront investments by providing low-cost, long-term financing. The UMVRDC will provide technical assistance to help Chippewa County through marketing materials and outreach to ensure residents in Chippewa County are aware of the program and know how to access its resources.

DevelopMN

Together 10 Greater Minnesota regional development organizations (RDOs) have released DevelopMN, a comprehensive statewide framework for regional economic development. Working together as the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO), the RDOs identified strategies to address the special challenges and opportunities of Greater Minnesota.

The DevelopMN plan identifies four cornerstones for strong regions and communities:

1. **Human Capital:** Developing, retaining and attracting talent.
2. **Economic Competitiveness:** Innovate. Grow. Succeed. Greater MN a place where individuals can turn ideas into business opportunities.
3. **Community Resources:** Identify, invest in and promote the quality of life assets, perks and features that uniquely identify and celebrate Greater Minnesota communities.
4. **Foundational Assets:** Collaboratively work to address infrastructure needs through thoughtful planning, innovative design and strategic investment.

MADO will use DevelopMN to:

- Create a common framework for regional economic plans that support the economic development planning regions in Greater Minnesota;
- Find areas of alignment with state and regional organizations and implement actionable strategies;
- Provide unified support for the issues that matter the most to Greater Minnesota communities; and
- Raise the bar on what constitutes effective rural economic development in Minnesota.

Develop MN was funded through support from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Blandin Foundation, and the Bush Foundation. View the DevelopMN plan on the MADO website www.mnado.org under DevelopMN. For more information about DevelopMN, contact Jacki Anderson, at 320.289.1981 or jacki.anderson@umvrdc.org.