



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

2024 Calendar & Annual Report





Center for Rural Affairs staff members celebrate 50 years of advocating for rural America. Pictured above, staff following a meeting in West Point, Nebraska.



Year in review

Dear Friends,

The Center for Rural Affairs marked half a century of service to rural communities this year.

For 50 years, the Center has worked alongside you to advance change in rural communities. While the work evolves over time, our commitment to improving the lives of everyone who calls rural America home remains steadfast. You can see a snapshot of this work in the pages of this calendar.

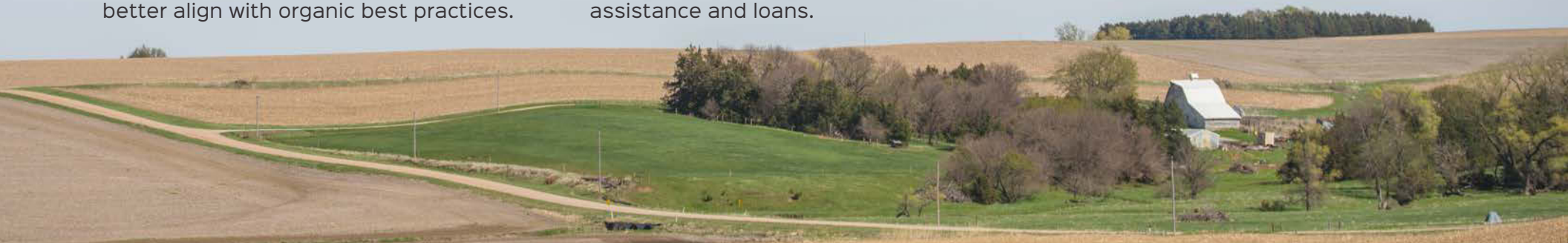
As I reflect on this milestone, I appreciate all of the people who contributed to our rich history and accomplishments. I am also inspired by how vibrant the Center has remained. Our reach and our impact are as great as they have ever been. The opportunity to shape the future is as important and compelling as ever.

The next 50 years are calling. With your support, I am confident we can rise to the challenge.

Brian Depew
Executive Director

Your 2023 accomplishments

- » Offered military members and veterans practical insights into farm operation, financing, and management. During this three-year project, 72 veterans shadowed experienced farmers, gained agriculture experience, and developed support networks.
- » Championed rural small businesses nationwide by writing the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Act of 2023 and gathering bipartisan congressional support to get it introduced as a marker bill.
- » Empowered nearly 2,000 participants through small business trainings and one-on-one sessions. Each entrepreneur provides a boost to Main Streets across Nebraska.
- » Connected 33 Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs in Fremont and Schuyler, Nebraska, with experienced business professionals through Mesa de expertos y recorrido de negocios (Table of Experts and Business Tour).
- » Supported organic producers by calling for improved crop insurance rules in the farm bill, including planting dates that better align with organic best practices.
- » Created solar siting guides for Iowa and Nebraska to help local lawmakers write solar project regulations in addition to producing environmentally friendly electricity. Rural solar offers income diversity for farmers.
- » Many of you joined us in calling, emailing, and meeting virtually with policymakers at nearly all levels of government, from rural electric boards to the halls of Congress.
- » Hosted 36 industry-specific academies focusing on how to run a business in rural America's most in-demand fields, such as child care, construction, and restaurants.
- » Bolstered local food systems with a \$15 million lending initiative to support the growth of small meat and poultry processors and independent livestock farmers.
- » Showcased the strength and resilience of rural communities to the USDA's undersecretary for rural development and Nebraska state officials during a tour of small businesses that have benefited from Center technical assistance and loans.
- » Strengthened rural communities through entrepreneurship and homeownership by placing more than \$31.7 million in loans since beginning lending in 1990.
- » Celebrated 50 years since rural champions founded the Center for Rural Affairs on Sept. 5, 1973. With your support, we will continue to help build a vibrant future for all rural Americans.
- » Brought in 147 attendees to 19 local food and makerspace workshops, alongside the Isanti and UMÓ^oHO^o people. Session leaders focused on culture and traditions, improving food access, and business development.
- » Assisted 17 families in buying or fixing their homes, thanks to \$1,284,835 in housing loans.
- » Held the Organic Transition Academy, which helped 61 grain, livestock, and fruit and vegetable farmers explore the transition and economics of certified organic production.



Legislative Change that Matters





Entrepreneurs and communities told us about overregulation hampering food truck businesses in Nebraska. We listened, and with your support, partnered with lawmakers to turn your solution into law. Seth Coates of Scouty's Shaved Ice, pictured, and many more testified for the bill.

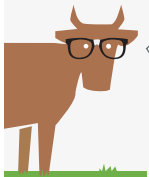


A Nebraska bill we championed will prevent **1,100 families** from losing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, ensuring rural children can access healthy food.

January

December 2023							February						
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	11	12	13	14	15	16 17	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	18	19	20	21	22	23 24	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	25	26	27	28	29		
31													

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 New Year's Day	2	 3	4 Nat'l Trivia Day— Try tweeting a rural fact to @cfra	5	6
7	8	9	10	 11	12	13
			Nat'l Cut Your Energy Costs Day			
14	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	16	 17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	 25	26	27
			Nat'l Compliment Day— Say something nice about rural America!			Nat'l Seed Swap Day— Exchange with your friends!
28	29	30	31			



Stay updated on legislation with our enewsletter: cfra.org/signup



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Native Food Systems and Entrepreneurship

We partner with Nebraska Native Nations to revitalize public spaces, advise gardeners, promote healthy food access, and bolster food- and art-based businesses. Your support of this work makes possible farmers markets and makerspaces that empower artists and entrepreneurs to create and learn.



Makerspace, noun: a place in which people with shared interests can gather to work on projects while sharing ideas, equipment, and knowledge.

February

January							March						
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28	29	30	31				24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						

Sunday

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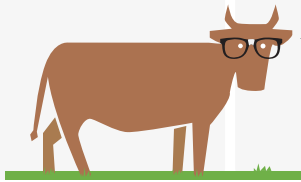
Wednesday

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Black History Month



Contribute to this work at cfra.org/give

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Groundhog Day

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Nat'l Send a Card to a Friend Day—Send rural greetings!

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Lincoln's Birthday

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Valentine's Day—Share your love for rural America on social media with #LoveRuralAm

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Nat'l Random Acts of Kindness Day and Nat'l FFA Week (17 - 24)

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Presidents' Day and Washington's Birthday

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World Day of Justice

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CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Leap Day

Empowering Child Care Entrepreneurs

Our child care conference for Spanish-speaking business owners removes financial barriers, improves training, and empowers entrepreneurs to make child care in our communities more sustainable and accessible.



The child care conference brought in **52 attendees**, while **106** came to our annual women's business conference. Both were offered in Spanish.



March

February							April							
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25	26	27	28	29			28	29	30					

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Saturday

		 <p>Find your nearest training at cfra.org/events</p>			1	2
● 3	4	5	6	7	8	9
● 10 Daylight Saving Time Begins	11	12	13	14	15 Int'l Women's Day	● 16
17 St. Patrick's Day—Do you have the luck of the Irish?	18	19 Nat'l Poultry Day and Nat'l Ag Day	20 First Day of Spring	21	22	23
24	● 25	26 Nat'l Spinach Day	27	28	29 Good Friday and Nat'l Mom and Pop Business Owners Day	30
31 Easter						



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Taking Rural Voices to Washington

Shaping federal policy requires your voice. Now is a critical time to join us in promoting priorities like conservation and rural development. Pictured, past Policy Director Johnathan Hladik discussed the Conservation Stewardship Program with South Dakota Sen. John Thune's staff.



The Center interviewed **Conservation Stewardship Program** participants in 5 states to identify practical improvements.

April

March							May						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

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	● 1 April Fools' Day	2	3	4	5	6
7 World Health Day and Nat'l Library Week (7 - 13)	● 8	9	10 Nat'l Farm Animals Day	11	12	13
14	● 15 Tax Day	16	17 Nat'l Haiku Poetry Day— Can you write one about rural living?	18	19 Nat'l Garlic Day	20
21	22 Earth Day—Plant a tree!	● 23	24 Administrative Professionals Day	25	26 Arbor Day	27
28 	29	30				

Read farm bill updates at cfra.org/farm-bill



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Lending When No One Else Will

Wilmer Linares and Alma Salas-Gutierrez bake El Salvador-style breads with family recipes passed down for generations. To open a bakery and grocery store in Fremont, Nebraska, they needed capital for equipment. The Center gave them a loan when banks would not.



In 2023, the Center placed
70 loans totaling
\$3,244,958.

May

April							June						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
28	29	30					23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30						

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

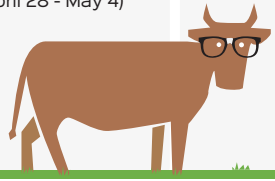
Wednesday

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Saturday

Nat'l Small Business Week (April 28 - May 4)



For resources, go to cfa.org/small-business



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May Day

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Cinco de Mayo

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Mother's Day

Armed Forces Day

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Memorial Day



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Growing Food Networks

Rural families can lack access to fresh and healthy foods. Our grassroots work in Iowa and Nebraska with schools, farmers markets, grocery stores, and local growers like Matt Johnson and Tiffany Clifton, pictured, keeps fresh foods in rural communities.



The Center collaborated on a **toolkit for farmers market managers and vendors**, available in both English and Spanish, at cfra.org/publications.

June

May							July							
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26	27	28	29	30	31		28	29	30	31				

Sunday

Monday

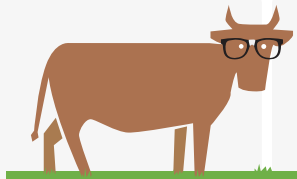
Tuesday

Wednesday

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Saturday



Find more local food access resources at cfra.org/food-systems

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Nat'l Weed Your Garden Day

Flag Day

Global Wind Day

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Father's Day

Juneteenth

First Day of Summer

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CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Following the Sun

The Center connects county officials with resources and technical assistance to support agriculture and clean energy solutions, like solar panels. A farm tour near Ramsey, Minnesota, pictured, showcased conservation practices, pollinator habitat, and adding renewable energy revenue to farm operations.



The paper, **“Policy Approaches for Dual-Use and Agrisolar Practices,”** is available for download at cfra.org/publications.

July

June							August							
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						30								

Sunday

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Tuesday

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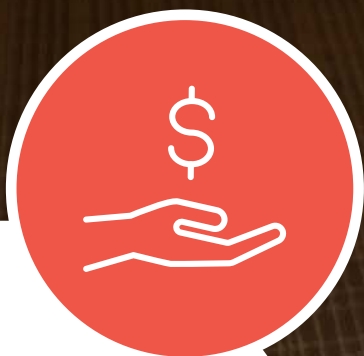
Friday

Saturday

 <p>Learn more at cfra.org/clean-energy</p>	1	2	3	4	● 5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	Independence Day	12 ●	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
● 21	22	23	24	25	26	● 27	
						Nat'l Day of the Cowboy	
28	29	30	31				
Parents' Day					CENTER <i>for</i> RURAL AFFAIRS		

Creating Opportunity

Jorge Velasquez, pictured, attended a Center business class at his local library. After contacting one of our loan specialists, he was offered additional training, one-on-one counseling, and, ultimately, a loan to start a flooring installation business.



Last year, we provided
25 loans totaling
\$1,569,690
to Latino entrepreneurs
and homeowners.

August

July							September						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
28	29	30	31				29	30					

Sunday

Monday


Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

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Saturday

 <p>Apply for a loan at cfra.org/lending</p>					1	2	3
<p>● 4</p> <p>Nat'l Farmers Market Week (4 - 10)—Visit your community market!</p>	5	6	7	8	9	10	Nat'l Watermelon Day
11	<p>◐ 12</p>	13	14	15	16	17	
18	<p>◑ 19</p>	20	21	22	23	24	
25	<p>◒ 26</p> <p>Women's Equality Day</p>	27	28	29	30	31	



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

From Greenhouse to Cafeteria


Central City High School students, pictured, earned the Center's annual Greenhouse to Cafeteria award for their hard work learning food production, community engagement, and running an agribusiness. Their greenhouse and outdoor garden grow food for the cafeteria and flowers for fundraisers.



We've expanded to **5 school districts** in southwest Iowa to begin and reinvigorate farm to school programs.

September

August							October						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	27	28	29	30	31		

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 ● Labor Day	3	4	5 Center for Rural Affairs founded on this day in 1973—50+ years of serving rural America!	6	7 Nat'l Acorn Squash Day
8 Grandparents' Day	9	10	11 ● Patriot Day	12	13 Stand Up to Cancer Day	14
15 Nat'l Farm Safety & Health Week (15 - 21)	16	17 ●	18	19 Talk Like a Pirate Day— Celebrate RRRural America!	20	21
22 First Day of Autumn— Take a drive and admire the fall colors	23	24 ●	25	26	27	28
29 	30					

Support this work at cfra.org/give



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Making Entrepreneurship Possible

The Center championed the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program in the farm bill to get loans and one-on-one help for entrepreneurs like Rachael Barlow and Heather Veik, owners of River Mill Coffee in Neligh, Nebraska.



We also advocated for the **Nebraska Microenterprise Tax Credit** and helped entrepreneurs like Heather and Rachael apply to help their business grow.

October

September							November							
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
29	30						24	25	26	27	28	29	30	

Sunday

Monday


Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

 <p>To find one-on-one business counseling, visit cfra.org/find-your-lender</p>		1	● 2 Rosh Hashanah (2 - 4)	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	● 10	11 Yom Kippur (11 - 12)	12 Nat'l Farmer's Day— #ThankAFarmer on social media
13	14 Indigenous Peoples' Day	15 International Day of Rural Women	16 Boss's Day	● 17	18	19
20	21	22	23	● 24	25	26 Nat'l Pumpkin Day
27	28	29	30	31 Halloween		



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Bridging Differences

In diverse communities your support helps develop leaders like Maria Rubalcava, who can engage in conversations across differences. We collaborate with community leaders, economic development districts, chambers of commerce, and new immigrants to build bridges across cultural and community divides.



Nearly **100 people** attended our intercultural leadership development workshops like Civity, My Neighbor's Voice, Foundation to Change, and Language Justice.

November

October							December						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
27	28	29	30	31			29	30	31				

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

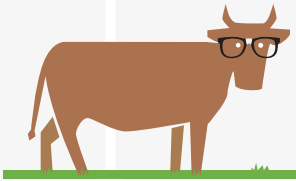
Wednesday

Thursday

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Saturday

Nat'l Native American Heritage Month



For more info, visit cfra.org/inclusion



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Dia de los Muertos

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Daylight Saving Time Ends

Election Day—
Get out and vote!

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Veterans Day—Thank you
to all who have served!

Philanthropy Day

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CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Thanksgiving Day

Native American
Heritage Day

Small Business
Saturday

Partnerships for Sustainability

We support efforts to address water quality, decrease flooding, incentivize on-farm conservation, and increase wildlife habitat. Pictured, Center staff and Iowa partners met with lawmakers at the Iowa State Capitol to advocate for watershed planning and management.



Iowa Watershed Management Authorities—partnerships among cities, counties, and conservation districts—have initiated more than **2,600 conservation practices statewide.**

December

November							January 2025						
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
● 1	2	3 Giving Tuesday— Will you make a gift to the Center?	4	5	6	7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
◐ 8	9	10 Human Rights Day	11	12	13	14
◑ 15	16	17	18	19	20	21 First Day of Winter
◒ 22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas and Hanukkah (Dec. 25 - Jan. 2)	26	27	28
◓ 29 	● 30 Find state-specific policy resources at cfra.org/state-policy	31 New Year's Eve				



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Celebrating 50 Years

In 1973, a group of rural Nebraskans came together with a passion. They knew they had to raise their voices if they wanted their communities to thrive. This year, the Center for Rural Affairs celebrated 50 years, pictured. Here's to 50 more!



Thank you 2023 board members: Dennis Demmel, President; Jay Hall, Vice President; Barbara Dilly, Secretary; Chuck Karpf, Treasurer; and Laverne Barrett, Krista Dittman, Melissa Florell, Greg Fripp, Ross Larson, Amanda McKinney, Nancy Meyer, Karina Perez, Amy Sandeen, Paul Swanson, Steele Valenzuela, and Jane Yule

This calendar illustrates the impact you helped achieve during the past year. We appreciate your commitment to creating vibrant family farms and ranches, small businesses, and communities. Thank you from the staff and board of the Center for Rural Affairs.



CENTER for
RURAL AFFAIRS

145 Main Street, PO Box 136 | Lyons, NE 68038 | 402.687.2100

For our latest financial and donor information, please visit cfra.org. The Center for Rural Affairs is an equal opportunity employer and provider.