

# CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

2026 Calendar & Annual Report





The Center for Rural Affairs staff, a team of 60, serves you and your communities across four states.

# A note from our executive director

Dear Friends,

The past year tested the Center. Major changes in Washington, D.C. brought sweeping changes that will deeply impact rural people, organizations, and businesses for decades to come.

The Center also experienced several grant terminations, most notably our major Solar for All award.

As always, our staff responded by engaging policymakers and advocating for federal programs that align with our mission and values. Despite major setbacks, public pressure in some cases led decision makers in Washington to reverse course and restore important programs.

The Center itself remains a carefully managed organization. While the loss of federal funding presents meaningful challenges, we remain strong, with a diverse and resilient set of funding streams. Thanks to your support, we continue advancing programs that embody our mission—work you'll see reflected in the pages of this calendar.

In the year ahead, we will find new ways to move our work forward and rise to meet the challenges before us.

Brian Depew  
Executive Director

# Your 2025 accomplishments

- » Empowered producers and landowners to navigate organic certification, strengthen marketing and business planning skills, and **transition to organic production** through expert guidance and peer connections.
- » Moved forward water quality and flood mitigation efforts in Iowa by supporting **watershed management authorities** that unite cities, counties, and conservation districts to plan and implement projects protecting this vital resource.
- » Provided \$200,000 of **fresh, healthy food** from local Nebraska farmers to food banks, senior centers, WIC offices, and other partners meeting critical community nutrition needs.
- » Developed 329 **rural entrepreneurs'** critical business skills through intensive multi-session academies focused on high-demand sectors such as child care, construction, and restaurant management.
- » Broadened **accessibility and workforce participation** by creating a Spanish-language guide that helps Nebraskans earn a Commercial Driver's License, offering clear steps and essential resource information.
- » Equipped 10 licensed **child care businesses** with tools to expand and sustain operations through an accelerator program—we're one of only seven Women's Business Centers nationwide selected to deliver it.
- » Expanded **opportunities for Latino farmers** through in-person and online Spanish-language workshops on vegetable production to break down language barriers and build comfort, confidence, and mutual respect.
- » Cultivated more resilient rural food systems by **connecting grocery stores and local producers** through training, mini-grants, and peer networks that expand food access and strengthen local economies.
- » Financed 25 **new homes** with nearly \$2 million in loans, expanding workforce housing and creating vital homeownership opportunities for families in two rural Nebraska communities.
- » Defended access to healthy food for thousands of Nebraskans through **coalition advocacy** that preserved SNAP income eligibility for low-income families, strengthening food security, community health, and economic opportunity statewide.
- » Championed rural energy resilience through leadership on **solar lending** and clean energy coalitions that support efforts to expand local generation capacity and deliver affordable, reliable energy for communities.
- » Collaborated with food system analyst Ken Meter on the "Nebraska Farm & Food Economy Report" and traveled statewide for six **community discussions** on farm sizes, commodity production, and food spending.
- » Delivered **small business training** and one-on-one coaching to 1,830 participants, empowering entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and strengthen economic vitality in rural communities.
- » Advanced legislative efforts to **revitalize Iowa's rural grocery sector** by championing a grocery reinvestment bill that passed the House unanimously but stalled in the Senate, laying groundwork for future progress.
- » Maintained **steadfast commitment to our mission** amid federal funding cuts, standing up for underserved communities and innovating to meet emerging needs in rural America.



# Hometown Grocery Pride

Small town grocer Dion Pitt brings fresh food options, strong social ties, and increased tax revenue to Logan, Iowa. Creative business models like that of Logan Superfoods were highlighted in our advocacy efforts, community listening sessions, and three grocery store tours.



Your support energized the Center as we brought forward legislation in Iowa and Nebraska to **strengthen local grocery stores and increase fresh food access.**

# January

December 2025							February						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
28	29	30	31										

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



Learn how you can help keep rural grocery stores open:



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New Year's Day

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Nat'l Trivia Day

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Nat'l Cut Your Energy Costs Day

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Martin Luther King Jr. Day

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Nat'l Compliment Day— Say something nice about rural America!

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Nat'l Seed Swap Day— Exchange with your friends!



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# Shaping the Future

Cuts from Washington, D.C. jeopardize the farms, businesses, and projects sustaining rural communities. A Center program supporting communities in accessing federal funding, including the pictured workshop, was terminated. Your support helps the Center identify impacts, engage policymakers, and pivot to address emerging needs.



**Together, we advocate based on shared values.**  
Thank you for taking action, answering our alerts,  
and contacting lawmakers locally and nationally.



# February

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> ● Black History Month	<b>2</b> Groundhog Day	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Nat'l Send a Card to a Friend Day—Send rural greetings!
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> ●	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Lincoln's Birthday	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Valentine's Day—Share your love for rural America on social media with #LoveRuralAm
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Presidents' Day & Washington's Birthday	<b>17</b> ● Nat'l Random Acts of Kindness Day	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> World Day of Justice	<b>21</b> Nat'l FFA Week (21 - 28)
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> ●	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>



Stay updated and learn how to help through our newsletter. Scan to subscribe:



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# Launching New Dreams

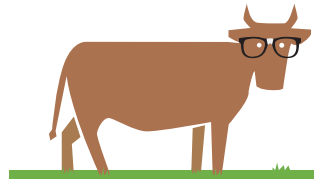
Heather Blackmore wove history into her pragmatic, value-added business plan for Corner Hardware and More in Orchard, Nebraska. A Center loan supported her entrepreneurial dream, while connections with past loan clients provided guidance and the supportive network she needed.



The Center placed business loans totaling **\$7.3 million** last year. Your support helps us keep circulating these assets throughout rural communities.



# March



Learn about our loans  
and encourage someone  
you know to apply:



February							April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	● <b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> Int'l Women's Day & Daylight Saving Time Begins	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	◐ <b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	● <b>18</b> St. Patrick's Day & Nat'l Ag Day	<b>19</b> Nat'l Poultry Day	<b>20</b> First Day of Spring	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	◐ <b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Nat'l Spinach Day	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> Nat'l Mom and Pop Business Owners Day	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	 <b>CENTER <i>for</i> RURAL AFFAIRS</b>			

# Creative Community Collaboration

Our two makerspaces offer Nebraska Native Nation members collaborative workshops with shared tools and expertise. Thanks to your support, participants learn traditional crafts like ribbon skirts, pictured, while fostering cultural traditions, entrepreneurial skills, creativity, and business opportunities.



We offered **119 workshops** in collaborative work spaces in Walthill and Santee.



# April

March							May						
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	30	31					24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday


Wednesday

Thursday

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Saturday



You can further this important work by making a donation: 

**1**  
April Fools' Day

**2**  
Good Friday

**3**

**4**

**5**  
Easter

**6**

**7**  
World Health Day

**8**

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**10**  
Nat'l Farm Animals Day

**11**

**12**

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**15**  
Tax Day

**16**

**17**  
Nat'l Haiku Poetry Day—  
Can you write one about rural living?

**18**

**19**  
Nat'l Library Week (19 - 25)  
& Nat'l Garlic Day

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**21**

**22**  
Earth Day &  
Administrative  
Professionals Day

**23**

**24**  
Arbor Day

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**31**



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# Serving the Land

Our farming workshop series connects veterans with agricultural experts specializing in resilient landscapes and accessing markets. Your commitment helps veterans and their families, like George Funderburk and Porscha Howard, apply their passion, discipline, and service to revitalize America's small farms and rural communities.



In 2025, we worked one-on-one with **63 veterans** in the third year of our farming workshop series.



# May

April							June								
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Sunday

Monday

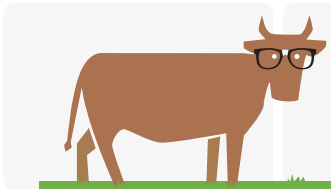
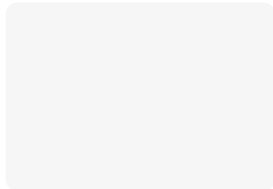
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Wednesday

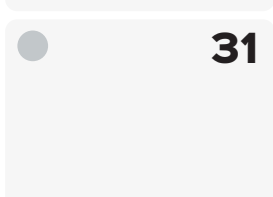
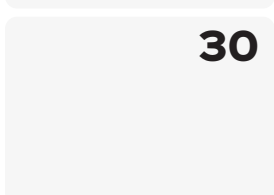
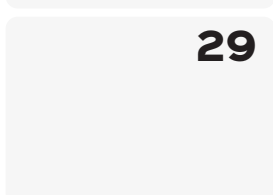
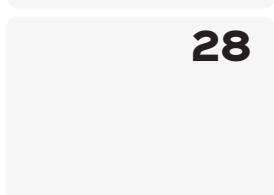
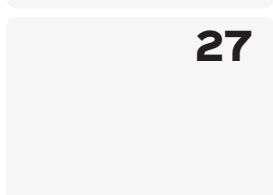
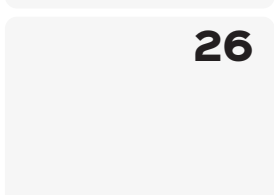
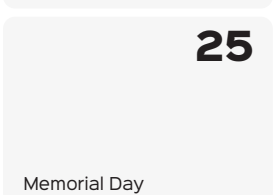
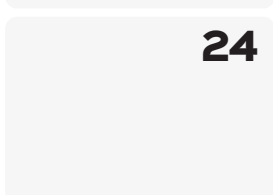
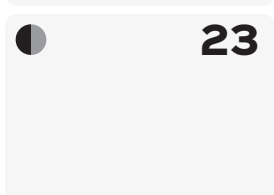
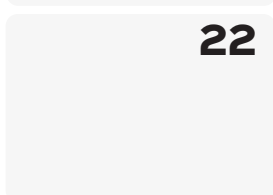
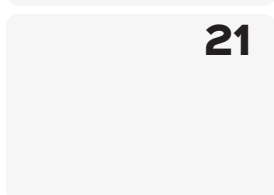
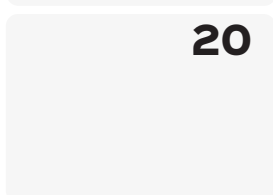
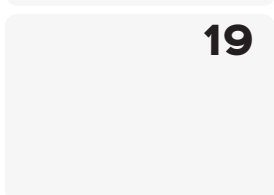
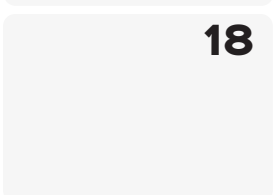
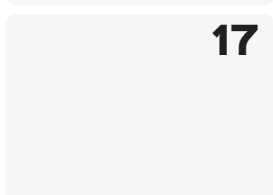
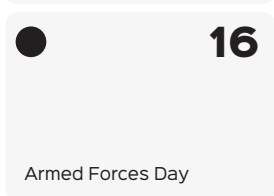
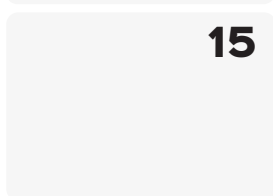
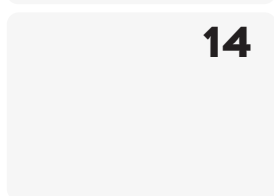
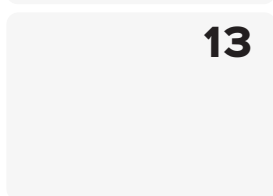
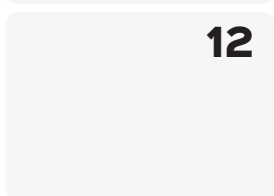
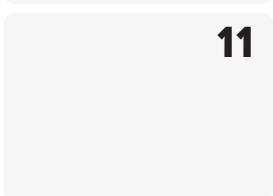
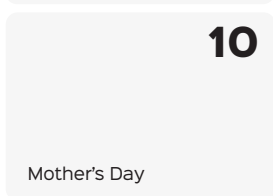
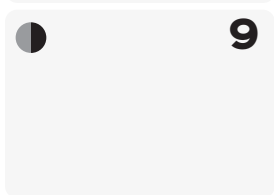
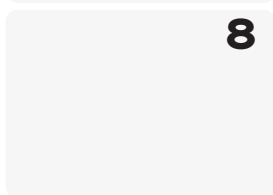
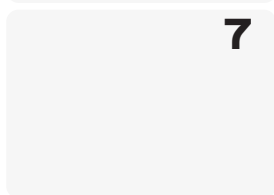
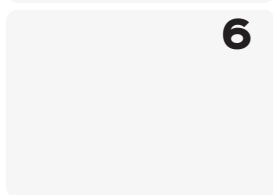
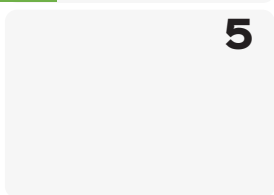
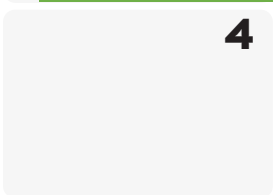
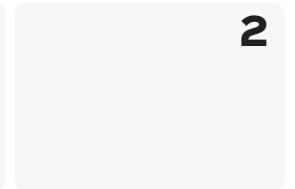
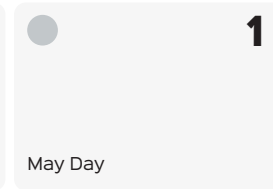
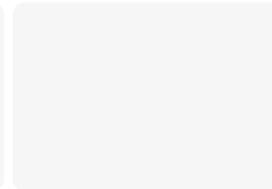
Thursday

Friday

Saturday



Grow this work by donating today:



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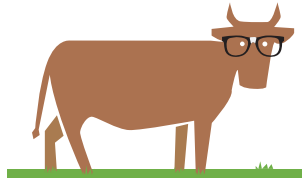
# Powering New Opportunities

Iowa Farmer Greg Lichty, who hosts multiple turbines on his Howard County property, contributed to the Center's study on wind's economic impact. Wind energy benefits rural counties by generating good-paying jobs, tax revenue, and clean electricity.



Center staff hosted four in-person workshops on clean energy siting with **70+ participants** and conducted personalized outreach to **28 counties** across four states.

# June



Learn more about our clean energy work:



May							July						
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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
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Flag Day

Global Wind Day

Juneteenth

Father's Day & First Day of Summer

Nat'l Weed Your Garden Day



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# Sharing Conservation Knowledge

Our Conservation Mentorship Network connects farmers exploring sustainable practices with experienced mentors like Vance McCoy, whose farm is pictured here. Vance shares decades of real-world knowledge about land management that works.



We developed the **Conservation Mentorship Network** and the **Beginning Farmer Conservation Fellowship Program** to share proven benefits of sustainable land management.

# July

June							August						
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28	29	30					23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					

Sunday

Monday

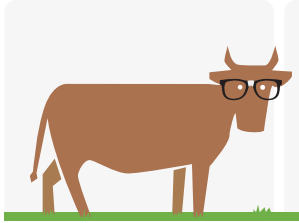
Tuesday


Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



Scan to learn more about these programs: 

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Independence Day

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Nat'l Day of the Cowboy

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Parents' Day



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# Strengthening Links in the Food System

Independent meat lockers anchor small town Main Streets, providing jobs and serving farmers. The Center's financing helps businesses like Fisher Packing in Indiana expand and update equipment—strengthening local food systems and building resilience for communities and producers alike.



The Center has made loans totaling **\$11.3 million** to small meat processors since 2023.

# August

July							September						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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19	20	21	22	23	24	25	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
26	27	28	29	30	31		27	28	29	30			

Sunday

Monday



Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

	 <div data-bbox="745 397 1123 495"> <p>Learn more about our loans to support farm and food businesses: </p> </div>						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b> Nat'l Farmers Market Week (2 - 8)	<b>3</b> Nat'l Watermelon Day	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Nat'l Sneak Some Zucchini Onto Your Neighbor's Porch Day- Need we say more?	
<b>9</b> Nat'l Book Lovers Day	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Women's Equality Day	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>						



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# Agrivoltaics in Action

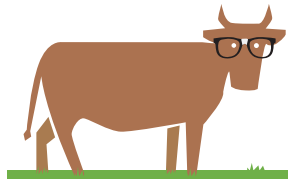
Thanks to your support, we partner with rural innovators like Arlo Hark and Josie Trople to promote agrivoltaics. Their company, Cannon Valley Graziers, uses sheep to manage vegetation at solar sites, maintaining agricultural production, improving soil health, and increasing biodiversity.



The Center created an **Agrivoltaics Toolkit** to inform local leaders shaping clean energy ordinances.



# September



Learn more about co-locating agricultural production with solar energy:



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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	☾ <b>4</b>	<b>5</b>  Center for Rural Affairs founded on this day in 1973—53 years of serving rural America!
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>  Labor Day & Nat'l Acorn Squash Day	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	● <b>10</b>  Welcoming Week (10 - 19)	<b>11</b>  Patriot Day, Stand Up to Cancer Day, & Rosh Hashanah (11 - 13)	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b>  Grandparents' Day	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	☾ <b>18</b>	<b>19</b>  Talk Like a Pirate Day—Celebrate RRRural America!
<b>20</b>  Nat'l Farm Safety & Health Week (20 - 26) & Yom Kippur (20 - 21)	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>  First Day of Autumn	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	● <b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>			



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# Growing Business Leaders

The Center's annual bilingual women's business conference connects first-time entrepreneurs to seasoned business owners and community leaders. Through shared stories and practical resources, attendees gain the inspiration, mentorship, and tools needed to overcome barriers and build thriving ventures.



Our fourth annual conference featured speakers who inspired **75 attendees** with real-world insights on turning challenges into business opportunities.

# October

September							November						
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				29	30					

Sunday

Monday


Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

 <p>Find your nearest training: </p>					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>
	Indigenous Peoples' Day & Nat'l Farmers' Day— #ThankAFarmer on social media			International Day of Rural Women	Boss's Day		
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>
	Nat'l Pumpkin Day						



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Halloween

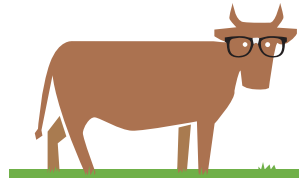
# Supplying the School Cafeteria

With your support, the Center helps to build rural food systems that deliver fresh food to school cafeterias and dinner plates. Our farmers market and farm-to-school programs support producers, nourish communities, and strengthen local economies.



The Center helps school districts serve local foods through **farm-to-school partnerships**, including greenhouse training as pictured here in Avoca, Iowa.

# November



Find more local food access resources:



October							December									
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S			
					1	2	3					1	2	3	4	5
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			
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

<p>● <b>1</b></p> <p>Nat'l Native American Heritage Month</p> <p>Dia de los Muertos (1 - 2) &amp; Daylight Saving Time Ends</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Election Day— Get out and vote!</p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p>● <b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Veterans Day—Thank you to all who have served!</p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p>
<p><b>15</b></p> <p>Philanthropy Day</p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p>● <b>17</b></p>	<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p>
<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p>● <b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>Thanksgiving Day</p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>Native American Heritage Day</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>Small Business Saturday</p>
<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>					



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# Innovative Business Solutions

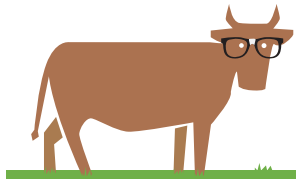
Wendy Urquidez's Mexican sushi delights northeast Nebraska diners. A Center loan funded food truck upgrades, while Spanish-language educational resources helped her business thrive.



The Center provided nearly **3,500 hours** of one-on-one counseling to small business owners in Nebraska last year.



# December



Scan for small business resources:



November							January 2027							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7							1	2
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
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	
							31							

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		● <b>1</b> Giving Tuesday— Will you make a gift to the Center?	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Hanukkah (4 - 12)	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	● <b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Human Rights Day	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	● <b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> First Day of Winter	<b>22</b>	● <b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Christmas Eve	<b>25</b> Christmas Day	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	● <b>30</b>	<b>31</b> New Year's Eve		



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New Year's Eve

# You Keep the Center Thriving

You make our important work possible. Thank you for your advocacy, for staying informed and involved, and for making financial contributions to the Center. Pictured here are snapshots from board and supporter events from throughout the year.



## Thank you 2025 board members:

Jane Yule, President; Melissa Florell, Vice President; Steele Valenzuela, Secretary; Chuck Karpf, Treasurer; and Laverne Barrett, Dennis Demmel, Barbara Dilly, Greg Fripp, Jay Hall, Ross Larson, Audrey Lutz Musilek, Nancy Meyer, Krista Peekes Dittman, Karina Perez, Paul Swanson, and Lee Tesdell.

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.



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145 Main Street, PO Box 136 | Lyons, NE 68038 | 402.687.2100 | [cfra.org](http://cfra.org)

For our latest financial and donor information, please visit [cfra.org](http://cfra.org). The Center for Rural Affairs is an equal opportunity employer and provider.