Dear Friends,


This year brought the fight for social and economic justice into renewed focus.

Thanks to your support, the Center transformed our work to meet the needs of rural people and rural places. We took on new fights, delivered services in new ways, and used new tools to keep long-term work moving forward.

It wasn’t an easy year. I want to thank you for being there for rural America's small business owners, farmers, and communities when it mattered.

As we emerge from 2020, our central focus must be on pulling together to create a more resilient future for our planet, for our communities, and for all people who call rural America home.

Brian Depew, Executive Director
YOUR 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

» Offered seeds and workshops to foster cultural traditions, better health, and to support families growing fruits and vegetables, including residents of two Native Nations who grew 195 gardens.

» Lent $1.3 million to people with dreams of running a successful small business. Your support gives rural Americans a fair chance to improve their economic situation through hard work.

» Co-hosted a film and discussion about pollinators in our food system attended by 50 people, and created a growing Facebook group dedicated to pollinator health, habitat, and beekeeping.

» Provided resources to small businesses on rapidly changing state and federal programs during COVID-19. Our staff remain available and ready to offer education and support for businesses navigating new waters.

» Assisted 10 rural school districts in revamping greenhouse programs for food production. These schools now teach kids how to grow food while producing healthy fruits and vegetables for the lunch room.

» Collaborated with policymakers to draft the bipartisan Rural Equal Aid Act. This bill supports small businesses hurt by the pandemic who have loans through U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development programs.

» Organized volunteers during the pandemic to unload and hand out 300 food boxes every other week to both Native and non-Native residents of the Omaha Nation.

» Gave a hand up to entrepreneurs with a new Express Loan to help bridge temporary revenue loss. Approved 31 loans totaling $235,120 in the early days of the pandemic.

» Supported the newly-created Nebraska Food Council with three virtual food chats that brought together 75 participants including farmers, educators, and market managers.

» Authored a bill to upgrade rural broadband access in Nebraska. This legislation received unanimous support in the Nebraska Unicameral and was signed into law.

» Championed important rural policy. 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.

» Worked with local meat processors to identify a policy response to ongoing industry challenges. These proposals informed the Strengthening Local Processing Act, a bipartisan measure introduced in Congress.

» Advised more than 130 beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as landowners, on farm startup and transition. These folks are helping keep rural communities vibrant.

» Counseled 963 people on business practices, including adapting to the pandemic and navigating the Paycheck Protection Program. These hard-working entrepreneurs were 51 percent women, 41 percent Latino, and 76 percent low- to moderate-income.

» Contributed thought leadership on race and meatpacking plant issues through five panel discussions reaching more than 600 people.
Expanding Business Assistance

With your support, we expanded our small business services in Nebraska. We opened a satellite office in Grand Island in March, pictured, and added three business development specialists to assist with training.

THE CENTER SERVES YOU FROM OFFICES IN LYONS, HARTINGTON, GRAND ISLAND, SCOTTSBLUFF, LINCOLN, AND SCHUYLER, NEBRASKA, AND NEVADA, IOWA, WITH STAFF IN NEBRASKA, IOWA, MINNESOTA, AND SOUTH DAKOTA.
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<td>Check out small business training opportunities, apply for a loan, and find your business specialist at cfra.org/small-business.</td>
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New Year’s Day

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January 2021

**Center for Rural Affairs | CFRA.ORG**
Amplifying Your Voice

Our voices are stronger when we speak together on issues that matter. Mike Tabbert, pictured, testified at the Nebraska Unicameral for broadband legislation in February. The bill was signed into law.

The coronavirus pandemic drove school, work, and public meetings online, highlighting the importance of broadband. THIS BILL WILL HELP CLOSE THE GAP.
Sunday  Monday  Tuesday  Wednesday  Thursday  Friday  Saturday

Black History Month  1  2  3  4  5  6

Groundhog Day  7  8  9  10  11  12  13

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

Valentine’s Day—Why do you love rural? Share on social media with #LoveRuralAm.

Presidents’ Day and Washington’s Birthday  14  15  16  17  18  19  20

Nat’l Random Acts of Kindness Day—What will you do?

World Day of Social Justice and Nat’l FFA Week (20 - 27)

21  22  23  24  25  26  27

Center for Rural Affairs  CFRA.ORG
Black Experience in Rural Nebraska

As the national Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum, hundreds of you joined us in two virtual conversations with community leaders who spoke about their experience as Black men living in rural Nebraska.

Our series of virtual events on the Black Experience, Mental Health and Race, Native American Experience, and Latino Experience highlighted the diversity of rural America.
Assisting Latino Businesses

Your values make it possible for small business owners like Mary Rosa and Eduardo Morales of Venemex Productions to receive the loans and training they need to succeed. We also offered loan deferrals to help businesses through the pandemic.

This year, we approved 37 loans to Latino entrepreneurs worth almost $750,000.
We provide bilingual services to entrepreneurs in Nebraska. Visit cfra.org/small-business.

Easter Sunday and Nat’l Library Week (4 - 10) — Visit your local library!

April 1st

April Fools’ Day

World Health Day

April 8th

Tax Day

April 14th

Nat’l Garlic Day

Administrative Professionals Day

Earth Day — Plant a tree!

Center for Rural Affairs  CFRA.ORG
Working for Meatpacking Safety

We stood with workers and protected communities when meatpacking plants became COVID-19 hotspots. Staff member Gladys Godinez, pictured outside of Tyson Foods in Lexington, spoke about the importance of safe working conditions with policymakers, the media, and community members.

We do not have to choose between food production and worker safety. Reliable food production depends on safe working conditions.
Stewarding Water Quality

Working with Iowans, we are promoting cooperative efforts among cities, counties, and conservation districts to improve the quality of water in rural areas of the state. These efforts empower local communities to tackle critical water quality issues.

We worked in two communities to launch Watershed Management Authorities, and fought for funding to expand the Nutrient Reduction Strategy.
Providing Fresh Food

We collaborated with producers and market managers to make local markets a safe place to buy and sell fresh food during the pandemic. With your support, growers like Diane Vaneczek, pictured, were able to continue to serve local customers.

IN 2020, WE PROVIDED ONE-ON-ONE ASSISTANCE TO 98 FARMERS MARKET MANAGERS AND ONLINE MARKET TRAINING TO 60 INDIVIDUALS.
Providing Academy Trainings

With your support, we expanded our small business trainings to include sector specific academies. The Restaurant Academy, pictured, attracted 12 participants in February 2020. Academies also include cleaning, construction, and child care, all offered in Spanish and English.

WE PROVIDED 127 TRAININGS LAST YEAR WITH 501 PARTICIPANTS. 65 CLASSES WERE PRESENTED IN SPANISH.
## August 2021

**Nat’l Farmers Market Week (1-7)—Visit your community market for fresh produce and locally-made products!**

**Nat’l Watermelon Day**

**Nat’l Sneak Some Zucchini Onto Your Neighbor’s Porch Day—Need we say more?**

**Nat’l Book Lovers Day**

**Center for Rural Affairs**

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During the pandemic, we offered all classes virtually. Check out a listing of current trainings at cfra.org/events.
Involving the Next Generation

When the presidential candidates campaigned in Iowa, sixth graders Jack Spence and Thomas Sauer were there to ask candidates about the impact of a changing climate on rural Iowa. We work with rural people to support common sense action to mitigate climate change.

The Center board launched a new climate committee to increase our focus on policy and practice to address climate change.
### September 2021

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- **5th**: Labor Day
- **6th**: Nat’l Acorn Squash Day
- **12th**: Grandparents’ Day
- **19th**: Nat’l Farm Safety & Health Week (19 - 25) and Talk like a Pirate Day—Celebrate RRRural America!
- **26th**

**Center for Rural Affairs**

- Founded on this day in 1973
- Distinct events for the month:
  - **Labor Day**: Celebrate your rural roots!
  - **Grandparents’ Day**: Appreciate the wisdom of your elders.
- **First Day of Autumn**: Take a drive through rural America to find fall colors!
- **Yom Kippur (27 - 28)**

**National Observances**
- **September 7**: Labor Day
- **September 21**: First Day of Autumn
- **September 26**: Yom Kippur
- **September 27**: Rosh Hashanah (18 - 20)

**More Information**
- **Center for Rural Affairs**
- Visit [cfra.org/climate](http://cfra.org/climate) to learn more about climate change.
Celebrating Rural Communities

Communities thrive by bringing people together, learning from each other, and celebrating our collective differences. Alongside 12 partner organizations, we helped host a cultural festival in Hastings, Nebraska, bringing together more than 600 residents.

This year, 76 community leaders participated in developing their intercultural and welcoming skills.
Learn more about community development at cfra.org/small-towns.

Indigenous Peoples’ Day

Natl’ Farmer’s Day—#ThankAFarmer on social media.

Nat’l Pumpkin Day

Halloween and Dia de los Muertos

Center for Rural Affairs

CFRA.ORG
Accessing Credit

Independent businesses keep small towns vibrant. With access to capital, Brent and Leah Daehling, pictured, were able to open a storefront for their antique and vintage furnishings business. Entrepreneurs like the Daehlings are taking control of their future, creating jobs and supporting community.
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<td>Small Business Saturday—What’s your favorite rural business? #ShopSmall</td>
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<td>Giving Tuesday—Make a gift to the Center (cfra.org/give)</td>
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Processing Local Foods

When the pandemic caused large meatpackers to stumble, farmers flooded local lockers. We worked with national lawmakers to introduce the Strengthening Local Processing Act to expand options for producers like Evrett Lunquist and Ruth Chantry, pictured.

At the height of the pandemic, local lockers were booked a year ahead. **Our bill will empower meat lockers to expand and help build local economies.**
We work hard for family farms and ranches year round. For up-to-date info, visit cfra.org/farm-and-food.
Our Dedicated Board and Staff

Our board meets quarterly to drive forward our Center for Rural Affairs mission and values. Pictured are staff and board members at our December 2019 meeting near Louisville, Nebraska.

Krista Dittman, President
Dennis Demmel, Vice President
Jay Hall, Secretary
Chuck Karpf, Treasurer
Leverne Barrett, Executive Committee
Melissa Florell, Executive Committee
Amanda McKinney
Barbara Dilly
Greg Fripp

Jane Yule
Keith Mahaney
Nancy Meyer
Paul Swanson
Ross Larson
Bob Warrick, Director Emeritus
Clark Nichols, Director Emeritus
Don Reeves, Director Emeritus

This calendar illustrates the impact you helped achieve during the last 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.