



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

YOUR RURAL NEWS FOR OVER 45 YEARS | LYONS, NEBRASKA | POPULATION 851 | SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2019

LAND AND LEGACY: TRANSITIONING TO TOMORROW'S OWNERS

BY LIZ DAEHNKE

The Center for Rural Affairs strives to help landowners utilize their property to its best potential—how to care for the land so it is fruitful for generations to come.

Landowners today are faced with the issue of how to handle land transitions or changes in ownership when the time comes, a key conversation Center staff urge landowners to have with their families and loved ones. Recently, the Center partnered with Practical Farmers of Iowa to bring several showings of the play “Map of My Kingdom” to rural communities in Nebraska and Iowa.

The one-woman show explores answers to the questions: “Who’s going to get the farm? And, what are they going to do with it? Will your future plans for your land

—SEE **LAND AND LEGACY** ON PAGE 4



Connie and David Hansen, of Anselmo, Nebraska, were involved in groundbreaking talks with Center founders that resulted in the organization’s establishment in 1973. The couple has dedicated themselves to our organization and its values, with David serving on the Board of Directors from 1978 to 2017 and Connie serving on the Granary Foundation Board. | Photo by Rhea Landholm

DAVID AND CONNIE HANSEN ARE DEDICATED TO RURAL LIFE

BY RHEA LANDHOLM, RHEAL@CFRA.ORG

On a July morning, the sky shone blue with puffy white clouds. Sand hills rushed past the windows, and a dust cloud collected behind our car as we made our way through central Nebraska.

We found the driveway on a curve, several miles from the nearest town, with a sign proclaiming “Hansen Common Stock Farm.”

Greeting us at the end of the long driveway were David and Connie Hansen. They waved and beckoned us into their home, through the screen porch, into their living room where a beautiful quilt hangs on the wall. Emilee Pease, executive and development assistant, and I sat down to talk about the

Hansens’ rich history with the Center for Rural Affairs and their dedication to rural life and to our organization’s values.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the early 1970s, David and Connie were involved in groundbreaking talks with Center founders that resulted in the organization’s establishment in 1973. David was a Methodist pastor, focused on rural issues and concerns.

By 1978, David had joined the Board of Directors, serving for 39 years, retiring in 2017. He was president from 1992 to 1995.

—SEE **DEDICATION** ON PAGE 2

→ Inside this issue

- 2 Note from the editor
- 4 Conference focuses on food and arts-based businesses
- 5 Coal plants could be replaced by renewable energy
- 6 Iowa farmer shows conservation and economics go hand in hand
- 7 Staff spotlight: Anna’s sights set on small business training
- 8 From the executive director: the little program that could

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

BY RHEA LANDHOLM, RHEAL@CFRA.ORG

My favorite part of this job isn't the cake we get for birthdays, although that is a pretty neat perk.

I absolutely love visiting with you—our donors, event and program participants, small business loan recipients, board members, and everyday, rural people.

One of those chats, with David and Connie Hansen, is featured in this edition. I met the couple at the annual staff and board party in 2006, when I was an intern. Connie sat next to me and asked questions about what I was doing

with the Center for Rural Affairs and about my future aspirations (at that time, I was in college with a goal to become a small town newspaper editor and publisher).

I later learned that she and David have quite the history with the Center. You can read the story for yourself, but I'll give away that David was in on initial talks to start our organization.

David and Connie have truly dedicated their lives to the Center and live every day by our set of values. I am glad to have spent three hours chatting with them for this story. Our goal is to



continue to preserve the Center's history through people's stories like this one.

Thank you, David and Connie. And thanks to all of you who have been a part of our organization in any way. On Sept. 5, we celebrate 46 years!

DEDICATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I thought an organization that was going to deal with things that were going on in rural America was required," David said.

Connie was involved as well. She joined the Center's Granary Foundation Board, serving for several years.

BIG ISSUES

When the Center for Rural Affairs was formed, corporate farming was a big concern, and remains an issue today.

"David has helped in our fight against corporate farms," said Brian Depew, Center for Rural Affairs executive director. "He has testified in front of legislative bodies in Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, and in Washington, D.C., most notably in favor of Initiative 300, Nebraska's anticorporate farming law."

"I thought I-300 was extremely

important," David said. "I think it established momentum so corporate ownership has not taken off like we feared it might—although there's plenty of it. Even though it was struck down, people learned and realized that too much land ownership by too few people is not good."

Other Center issues David noted of high importance were fair property taxes, conservation, small farm energy project, state and national legislatures, and work in coalition building.

"I would say that legislative work has become prominent because it has a big bearing in what happens in society," he said. "We try to get laws that are fair and not allow money to control things."

He praised the hard work of Center staff over the years. And, he mentioned work with other organizations and lawmakers.

"When we are getting other organizations involved, you have a better power block to influence legislation," David said. "Work in lobbying relationships has been critical. We don't have enough voice in what goes on in making laws. That ends up not being good for society."

BOARD MEETINGS

When David joined the board, the first annual meeting was in the winter in Walthill, Nebraska, the Center's home at the time. He said it was "a challenge to get there." After that, the date of the annual meeting was changed.

Connie always accompanied David to the meetings, eventually held throughout Nebraska, and they carpooled with several individuals, meeting "a lot of wonder-

—SEE DEDICATION ON PAGE 3

PAPER & E-NEWS

This newsletter is available both electronically and in print. To receive it online, sign up at the Center's website, cfr.org, or email us at info@cfr.org.

Editing and layout by Rhea Landholm
Additional editing by Liz Daehnke

Printed at West Point News, West Point, NE

The Center for Rural Affairs is
an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Address corrections:
You may correct your mailing address by faxing the back page to 402.687.2200, or by calling the Center for Rural Affairs at 402.687.2100.





David and Connie Hansen's operation is called "Hansen Common Stock Farm" because the couple, and David's brother, scraped together what they could to purchase the place. | Photo by Rhea Landholm

DEDICATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

ful people.”

“I found the meetings were very assimilating discussion,” David said. “People were so knowledgeable and interested in rural things. I value the experiences.”

For almost 40 years, the couple scheduled family weddings, reunions, and other events around board meetings. They even spent their 25th wedding anniversary in bunk beds at Ponca State Park—where a board meeting was held.

And, in the past, many board members hosted meetings at their homes. David and Connie had their turn holding an event in conjunction with the mortgage burning of their farm in the 1990s.

However, the rain poured for days prior to the meeting, so everyone parked on the gravel road and then rode a hayrack down the lane. (The original plan was to give hayrack tours around the farm.) Connie noted committee meetings were held in bedrooms.

Another board meeting memory hangs above their heads: the quilt in the living room. David purchased the quilt en route to a board meeting from a shop in Dodge, Nebraska.

FARM LIFE

David was raised on a farm about 20 miles east of where they live now, near Anselmo, Nebraska, a combination of ranch and culti-

“THE BEST FERTILITY FOR THE LAND IS THE FEET OF THE OWNER. IF PEOPLE ARE OUT WALKING AROUND ON THEIR LAND TO SEE WHAT IS GOING ON, THEY CAN TAKE BETTER CARE OF IT.” —DAVID HANSEN

vation.

“The best fertility for the land is the feet of the owner,” David said. “If people are out walking around on their land to see what is going on, they can take better care of it.”

Today, the couple farms organically, with a focus on conservation. And, David still hays the way he grew up haying. They grow alfalfa, and other crops as needed. For example, when we visited, they explained they didn’t need any corn because they had enough corn on hand from the year before. They didn’t need any soybeans for nitrogen build up, so they didn’t plant soybeans.

They didn’t always plan on buying a farm, though when the opportunity came up, tenacity and hard work prevailed.

“Somehow we were determined that we would own this,” Connie said.

The couple lived in Omaha, and resided in a house owned by the church where David pastored. They couldn’t get a loan from the bank, due to lack of collateral. And, by that time, land prices were sky high.

In 1981, a small property came available where they live today,

and they were able to work things out through a contract. The couple got by with little equipment, and say they have the only manure spreader in their part of Custer County, maybe even the whole county.

“That is why we had animals, we had diversity,” David said. “So, we use crop rotation; we use the kind of crops that would do well. We grew things our animals need and eat.”

Along with working the farm, Connie was also employed at the hospital in Broken Bow, Nebraska, and David was a substitute pastor for many years.

HONORED FOR THEIR DEDICATION

Connie and David received our Seventh Generation Award in March 2018, for their major contributions in improving rural life and protecting our land and water. The couple are lifetime advocates of family farms and the rural way of life.

“David and Connie truly live out the Center’s values in every aspect of their life; they are inspiring,” said Brian. “Every time I visit with them, I come away with renewed energy for our work.”

LAND AND LEGACY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

create harmony or strife for your family? Or, have you even started to think that far ahead?”

Commissioned by Practical Farmers of Iowa and written by Iowa’s Poet Laureate Mary Swander, “Map of My Kingdom” tackles real-life situations faced by people all over the Midwest.

Randy Lukasiewicz, a native Nebraskan who grew up as part of a family-run business in Farwell, Nebraska, was so moved by the performance that he started a campaign to try to get a showing in his hometown.

“Knowing that the stories are real, and with such a beautiful, powerful, moving, and hopeful ending, I believe this needs to be performed in every rural (and even urban) community,” Randy said.

The play’s message rang true for Randy in more ways than one. He is the fourth generation of a small town Main Street business that recently closed after more than 100 years selling harnesses, insurance, autos, pianos, furniture, carpeting, appliances, and more, and even serving as the town undertaker. Randy recalls how closely he could



Recently, the Center for Rural Affairs hosted the play “Map of My Kingdom” which tackles the topic of “Who is going to get the farm?” | Photo by Kylie Kai

relate to certain themes in the play.

“As a non-owner, I remember the gaping hole I felt when dad was killed, my grandfather dying a few weeks later, and my uncle, thousands of miles away, recovering from a near-death accident,” he said. “There was no written succession plan. Given the years I worked there with my dad, grandfather, great-grandfather, and uncle, I feel I have experienced every

one of the situations [presented throughout the play].”

Randy is not the only audience member who had a strong reaction to the play. Lin Brummels, another native Nebraskan, grew up in Antelope County and now owns land in Wayne County.

“The play did a great job of presenting the dilemma most of us face regarding how to pass our land and/or homes to our chil-

—SEE LAND AND LEGACY ON PAGE 5

CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON FOOD AND ARTS-BASED BUSINESSES

BY RHEA LANDHOLM, RHEAL@CFRA.ORG

Registration is open for the Food + Art Conference: Growing Rural Businesses and Communities, hosted by the Center for Rural Affairs.

The event will be held on Thursday, Oct. 10, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Pender Community Center, 614 Main St., in Pender, Nebraska.

The conference will offer resources and connections for food and arts-based businesses, and rural community or economic developers wishing to develop economic opportunities around local

foods and the arts.

“Local foods and the arts are emerging market opportunities for rural communities and business owners,” said Sandra Renner, Farm & Community Program director with the Center for Rural Affairs. “This conference focuses on giving small food and arts-based businesses the tools they need to be successful and access to resources usually only found at larger conferences in urban areas.”

Session topics include funding, small business basics, food hubs,

how to market and sell your art, developing cooperatives, and community development around local foods and the arts.

An optional post-conference session will be held the same day from 4 to 6 p.m., and pre-sessions will be offered Wednesday, Oct. 9, in Walthill and Winnebago.

For more information and to register, visit cfra.org/events/FoodArtConference. Contact Sandra at sandrar@cfra.org or 402.687.2100 ext. 1009 with questions.

LAND AND LEGACY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

dren,” said Lin. “I’ve been thinking about the question of inheritance fairness for a while. My small ranch, in the middle of corn country, doesn’t have enough acreage to cut in half. It would make the land rather useless to both of my children, and probably place them in the position of needing to sell.”

During the play, the topics of fairness and the future of property were brought up, which resonated with Lin and Randy on different levels.

“The question of fairness to both children is a very personal matter,” said Lin. “The play also brought up the question, ‘Does fairness mean equal?’ This is an important issue for our family to figure out.”

Lin said the play reminded her of the need to take action and make an appointment with a lawyer to begin discussing possible options like trusts or other legal choices. She hopes these options will make it easier for her adult children, should she become incapacitated, or pass away.

“The play clarified for me that one should not leave land transition to chance or to a potential for



Following the performance of “Map of My Kingdom” was an audience discussion to facilitate conversations about land transitions. | Photo by Kylie Kai

fighting between my two children,” she said. “I want to involve them in the decision-making process, if possible.”

Though he’s not a farmer, Randy has possessions of value, and feels it’s his responsibility to draw his kids into the conversation topics of what, when, and where, and his estate.

“I need to work today to plan for their and my future,” he said.

“What good is it to hang on to things now and create a burden for my family when I am gone? We may not all have land or a farm, but we all have an estate that will need to be settled. Life is too short to not have ‘the conversation.’”

In addition to the performances, the Center for Rural Affairs presented audience discussions to facilitate conversations about land transitions, as this is a pressing issue for landowners in rural America.

“People’s kids may not be equipped to deal with land transitions if they aren’t involved in their parents’ wishes or a conversation before they go,” said Sandra Renner, Farm and Community Program director for the Center. “We want to help connect landowners to resources, and beginners who are willing if they don’t already have a successor.”

In the next two years, learning circles will be held where “Map of My Kingdom” was recently performed in Nebraska and Iowa. Watch cfra.org/events for these events and more.

COAL PLANTS COULD BE REPLACED BY RENEWABLE ENERGY

BY CODY SMITH, CODYS@CFRA.ORG

U.S. wind and solar capacity is expected to grow by 6 percent and 14 percent, respectively, in 2019, and a new report says it would be cheaper for many electric cooperatives to retire existing coal plants in favor of renewable energy generation.

“Rural Electrification 2.0: The Transition to a Clean Energy Economy,” authored by the Center for Rural Affairs, CURE, and We Own It, was released in June.

The report presents strategies for governments and coopera-

tives to restructure their debt and provides advice for those seeking to transition away from coal-based power generation.

“Rural communities will be better positioned to realize energy independence once current debt on existing coal plant infrastructure is eliminated,” said Erik Hatlestad, energy democracy program director at CURE. “This, in addition to investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, would help electric cooperatives plan for the future and serve their members more effectively.”

Highlighting leadership on renewable energy investment, the report recognizes electric cooperatives that have set ambitious renewable energy generation targets.

“As we work to mitigate the impacts of climate change, adopting more renewable energy projects will provide new tax revenue and jobs for rural communities while reducing emissions,” said Liz Veazey, network director at We Own It.

To learn more, or to download the report, visit cfra.org/publications/RuralElectrification.

IOWA FARMER SHOWS CONSERVATION AND ECONOMICS GO HAND IN HAND

BY KAYLA BERGMAN, KAYLAB@CFRA.ORG AND KATE HANSEN, KATEH@CFRA.ORG

Mark Tjelmeland can trace his interest in conservation back to his childhood. When he was a young boy, Mark's mother peaked his curiosity in natural resources by taking him to a field that was being tilled. She showed him the topsoil, subsoil, and explained why topsoil depth differed between locations on their farm.

A few years later, as a sixth grader, he was taught a soil and water conservation unit that furthered his interest in the topic. These two events deeply resonated with Mark, and he has been committed to conservation and climate efforts ever since.

Mark, a part of the Center for Rural Affairs' climate work, and his wife Connie, have been farming for almost four decades, and haven't been afraid to try new things in their operation.

Perhaps their most unique endeavor was raising a flock of more than 700 chickens, which were pastured on a 17-acre reconstructed prairie on their farm located just west of McCallsburg, Iowa.

"Having the chickens on the prairie had a variety of environmental benefits, including attracting insects and pollinators," Mark said.

After 20 years of selling eggs to nearby stores and markets, the Tjelmelands retired their egg operation. Today, they produce corn, soybeans, oats, and hay with an extended rotation system.

Over the years, Mark and Connie have prioritized our natural resources and climate through various conservation practices. Along with extended rotation,



Mark Tjelmeland, who has been farming for four decades with his wife, hasn't been afraid to try new things in his operation. One of the most unique endeavors was raising a flock of more than 700 chickens on a reconstructed prairie. | Photo by Kayla Bergman

they have established five acres of pollinator habitat with 70 species, seeded grassed waterways, done minimum tillage, conducted late spring nitrate testing, and sidedressed nitrogen on his corn, among other things.

Many of these practices were established or expanded through enrollment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service's Conservation Stewardship Program. Mark also serves as a Story County soil and water conservation district commissioner.

Mark sees renewable energy as another important part of his role in addressing climate change. He installed solar panels to generate energy for his home and farm.

For Mark, the benefits of conservation practices are tied directly to climate.

"I am concerned about the ways that changing climate will affect my grandchildren and future generations," he said. "I see conserva-

tion practices as a moral choice, but also a practical one."

The farmer said conservation is also good for his economics.

"Conservation practices have saved me money in the long run, and I wish more farmers were aware of how conservation practices could benefit their operations," Mark said.

He encourages any farmer to reach out to the Center for Rural Affairs and other organizations to learn more about conservation, and how they can implement their own practices.

Since that passion was sparked when Mark was a curious young child, he has committed much of his life and business to conservation. With an increased urgency to address climate change in recent years, Mark's efforts illustrate that doing what is right for our planet can also be a smart, economic choice for an operation's success.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

ANNA'S SIGHTS SET ON SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING

BY LIZ DAEHNKE

Born and raised on a cattle ranch near a small town in southeastern Idaho, Anna Pratt learned to drive on country back roads, charged purchases to a tab at local farm supply stores, and took part in the challenges and rewards of a family-owned business.

In other words, she's no stranger to rural America.

A new member of the Center for Rural Affairs team, Anna is the Women's Business Center director, and is excited about her role.

"I am often amazed at the outcomes that result when like-minded people join resources and efforts for a common vision," said Anna. "From my first interactions with the Center staff, I've seen that a common vision and passion for their work is evident. I'm thrilled to work with everyone at the Center, while continuing to strengthen the network of partners across the state that share our values, as well as forging new partnerships."

In her role, Anna organizes, implements, and evaluates training and assistance efforts for rural entrepreneurs across Nebraska. She works with the Center's regional business specialists and contractors to provide logistical support



Anna Pratt

for programs and classes, and fosters relationships with borrowers and potential borrowers.

Anna's varied skilled set makes her well prepared for her position.

"My background is in formal and informal education, and curriculum development, so I have a strong understanding of how education and training translates to practical skills," Anna said. "I also grew up and worked in a small family-owned business and have an intimate understanding of the ups and downs of that way of life."

She plans to take that knowledge and experience and apply it to different areas of her job.

"First, I have a lot to learn about how the Center runs, as well as

other Women's Business Centers around the country, and explore the intricacies of my role," she said. "Then, as I start to make goals for this position, I hope to enhance and build on existing programming and implement ideas that are creative, purposeful, and sustainable."

The opportunity to help rural America prosper means a great deal to Anna.

"Rural communities are a crucial component to thriving agricultural, natural resources, and other like industries," she said. "And, while I have enjoyed the benefits of rural America, I have also witnessed the complex issues that face its citizens in the 21st century. Helping to ensure a bright future for all members of rural communities is very important to me."

When she's not working, Anna loves to spend time out in nature with her new fiance, whether hiking, exploring, or riding horses and working cattle, and looks forward to discovering fun activities in her new home in Nebraska.

Anna can be reached at the Center's office in Lyons, Nebraska, at 402.687.2100 ext. 1024 or annap@cfra.org.

THE LITTLE PROGRAM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

our staff, our congressional champions won a last-minute change in the annual appropriations bill to fund the program. We'll fight each year to renew this funding.

RMAP is unique. It's the only federal program that supports revolving loan funds along with grants to business assistance organizations working exclusively in rural areas.

We need a federal economic policy that works for everyday rural

Americans. That includes ensuring we deliver capital and training to support our small-town businesses. RMAP delivers on that need.

Since 2008, RMAP has capitalized revolving loan funds with more than \$72 million and provided grants to small business development organizations in excess of \$21 million. The loan funds revolve in each region, so the total impact to rural small businesses is well over \$100 million. The

grant funds support training and hands-on coaching with even more businesses.

One business launched with the help of the program is Chatterbox Brews in Tekamah, Nebraska. Cindy Chatt opened the brewpub in her hometown in 2017. RMAP has helped lift up businesses like hers in 45 states stretching from Maine to California.

It's the little program that could. It exists all because of you.



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

145 MAIN STREET, PO BOX 136 | LYONS, NE 68038-0136
CFRA.ORG | INFO@CFRA.ORG

Address Service Requested

09/19



Transitioning land to tomorrow's owners

Inside: Who's going to get the farm?

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE LITTLE PROGRAM THAT COULD

BY BRIAN DEPEW, BRIAND@CFRA.ORG

Let me tell you a story. It's a story of a little program called RMAP. Sounds wonky, right?

It's the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, which is part of the larger farm bill. The story started a long time ago.

A Center study in the late 1980s showed a high rate of self-employment in rural areas, but few economic development strategies to help this sector. The more rural the area, the higher the rate of self-employment, the report documented. This research led us to expand our programs to serve small businesses.

We launched our Rural Entrepreneur Assistance Project in 1990 to serve rural Nebraska businesses. We led efforts to win passage of the

Nebraska Microenterprise Development Act in 1994. That program has invested more than \$10 million in small business development in the state since.

We know small businesses add to the opportunities for small-town residents to earn an ownership stake and support their communities, advancing values of the Center.

As we expanded our policy focus nationally, we heard from rural leaders trying to start or expand microenterprise programs but struggled to attract enough resources. Our experience in Nebraska informed the next move—a national campaign to win a new program to support rural small businesses.

The idea for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program

was born. Starting in 2006, our staff traveled from North Dakota to North Carolina to organize Center supporters and partners around the idea.

We called on some of you to make calls that year. Your action helped us win critical votes in committee. In 2008, we won the program as part of the new farm bill.

With strong support, we won renewal of the program in 2014.

Then, the effort almost hit the rocks in 2018 when Congress reauthorized the program but stripped away all the funding.

We sprung to action. We called on you with a flurry of action alerts.

In a move that surprised even

—SEE [THE LITTLE PROGRAM](#) ON PAGE 7