Executive Director Brian Depew pauses after working lambs through the barn at his small farm near Lyons, Nebraska.

MEET BRIAN DEPEW

HOMETOWN: Laurens, Iowa

EDUCATION: Bachelor’s from Simpson College, 
Master’s from Colorado State University, 
Doctoral work at Michigan State University

FAVORITE THING ABOUT LIVING AND WORKING RURAL:
The people—kids selling fireworks in the muggy heat, the long-serving city councilwoman and business owner, farmers driving to town for coffee and waving at each car they meet.
The Center for Rural Affairs turned 40 years old this year. Think about that for a minute.

When Marty Strange and Don Ralston first threw open the doors 40 years ago, it was anyone’s guess if the scrappy organization on main street in a town of 800 would make it for one year.

It didn’t take long before rural people were flocking in from across the state.

They came to early Center gatherings. They had heard about a new organization located in the heart of rural America with a mission to lift up everyday rural people. An organization with a belief in a better future.

Soon the national media took note. More and more rural people from further and further away joined the ranks – calling themselves supporters of the Center for Rural Affairs.

It was clear. The Center answered a powerful calling; it would endure. Many of you contributed to those early successes. You helped secure early wins and build a base that pushed us to new levels.

The Center’s mandate has always been the same. In recent years we’ve expanded the strategies to get there. We’ve reached out to new friends and new allies across the nation too.

Some of you responded and joined the cause in more recent years. Together we are stronger than ever.

When I accepted the job of your Executive Director last fall, I became just the 3rd director in 40 years. If you know the Center, that is not surprising. People who commit to our cause are in it for the long haul. That includes supporters like you. It includes board members, staff, and allies.

As we reflect on 40 years of history, we also look forward. Our work has never been so important. Demand for small business capital is exploding; family farm issues remain important; while health care, energy, and climate demand more attention. Small towns are becoming more diverse, creating new opportunities and new challenges.

It is time for all of us to step up to the plate. Our success going forward depends on you.

In this annual report, you will read about the rural America you are helping create. That includes intensive work in individual communities close to home all the way to federal policy organizing efforts engaging supporters like you from all 50 states. We seek to change communities and to move the needle in Washington.

It is a unique set of work tied together by a belief that rural people, acting together in their own community and banding together across communities, can shape the future of small towns and the countryside.

It is work we do together with you.

Brian Depew
Executive Director
FERNANDO LOPEZ OWNS EL TAPATIO, A FAMILY RESTAURANT IN COLUMBUS, NEBRASKA. IN BUSINESS SINCE 2000, FERNANDO CREDITS THE CENTER’S RURAL ENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (REAP) FOR HELPING HIM SUCCEED.

Fernando was a perfect fit for our Entrepreneur of the Year award last year. He illustrates the pride and success your support creates for small businesses and rural communities. Dreams of business ownership drive people to risk, to build, to persevere, and to achieve. They (and you!) are the foundation of the rural economy.

Entrepreneurs tell us they need four essential services to succeed: business training, counseling and one-on-one technical assistance, a chance to network with others, and access to capital. We deliver these services through our Rural Enterprise Assistance Program (REAP).

Last year, our REAP Women’s Business Center trained and counseled over 1,300 entrepreneurs. We partnered with local organizations across the state to bring diverse opportunities to rural Nebraskans.

Our REAP Hispanic Business Center reached over 800 Hispanic entrepreneurs through trainings and counseling. Staff lent their rural perspective to numerous events ranging from the Heartland Latino Conference to the National Association for Enterprise Opportunity conference.

REAP lending made a big impact for startup and existing entrepreneurs throughout Nebraska. We extended over $1 million in loans for the year while leveraging close to $1.8 million. REAP helped to create or retain 518 jobs.

Rural entrepreneurs face the same challenges as businesses located in underserved urban areas. A new initiative, the Nebraska Small Business Collaborative formed last year. This dynamic collaboration of programs provides services to the smallest businesses in all distressed areas of Nebraska.
At the 2013 Women Entrepreneur’s Conference, speaker Karen Linder shares her wisdom on “Ladies who Launch.” The event was sponsored by our Women’s Business Center.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013**

- **Named a** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION
- **Placed 78 loans totaling** $1,084,950
- **Leveraged an additional** $1,777,685 from other sources due to REAP assistance
- **Created or retained** OVER 500 jobs
- **Counseled and trained** OVER 2,100 clients
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013

Rep Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) received the “George Norris Policymaker Award.” For the first time, the Center recognized a policymaker for extraordinary efforts to push for policy supporting family farmers and ranchers, rural entrepreneurship, and conservation of our natural resources.

Good friend and beginning farmer Anna Jones-Crabtree, was appointed to serve on USDA’s Beginning Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee. Our advice: LISTEN UP, SECRETARY VILSACK!

Grant and loan funds were awarded to 123 microenterprise and anti-poverty organizations in 41 states through the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, part of the 2008 farm bill and still around thanks to you!
Advocacy

With your Grassroots support, we continue to fight for policy supporting Family Farms, Ranches, and Small towns.

After a two-year debate, a new farm bill cleared the House and Senate as this report heads to the printer. It was a heck of a fight. We won some and lost some. Many of you weighed in throughout to speak up for investments in beginners, small businesses, and natural resources.

Thanks to you – our grassroots supporters – and Senator Grassley (R-IA) and Representative Fortenberry (R-NE), we won historic farm program reform for the first time ever in both the House and the Senate. The reforms you helped win were designed to reign in unlimited farm subsidies to the nation’s largest and wealthiest farms.

Regrettably, the provision was stripped in backroom deal-making in the final hour of negotiations. Stay tuned for how you can help us keep up the fight in 2014.

Despite this loss, there are several key wins in the final farm bill. That includes support for beginning farmers and ranchers, assistance for rural small businesses, and grants to build value-added markets.

In 2013, we also brought national attention to the alarming loss of native prairies and grasslands. Data quietly published by the Farm Service Agency showed nearly 350,000 acres of new land converted to cropland, including over 54,000 acres in our home state of Nebraska. We jumped on the data and used it to build support for a “sodsaver” provision in the farm bill.

Finally, thanks to a group of farmers and ranchers who met with key policymakers, we won policy to link basic conservation standards to federal crop insurance.

You helped make all of this possible. Here’s to fighting the good fight together in 2014!
LATINO FARMERS IN NEBRASKA TOUR GARCIA FARMS TO SEE A DIVERSIFIED OPERATION FIRSTHAND. YOUR SUPPORT ALLOWS US TO ENGAGE NEW AND OLD FARMERS, TO PROMOTE CONSERVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ON THE GROUND AND IN PUBLIC POLICY.

Farming and ranching is more than an occupation. It is a passion, a way of life for most. In 2013, your support allowed us to expand efforts to establish new farmers and give them a real chance to succeed.

With your help, we launched a training program for Latino farmers in conjunction with University of Missouri. Fifteen Latino farmers visited farms, learned to build business plans for loan applications, and met financial and community resource providers. We also provided small-farm business and natural resource instruction to a dozen students and ag instructors at Little Priest Tribal College.

We placed six women as interns with experienced women farmers. Another group of women beginning farmer interns will be placed with a new crew of farmer-mentors in 2014.

The number of women who own farmland is on the rise. They have expressed a desire to learn more about conservation and to be respected for the decisions they make on their land. We lent a hand on both fronts in several workshops on conservation planning for women landowners.

Previous experience helping veterans to start farming led a military base in Missouri to ask us for advice on providing farm career training to military veterans. Veteran and farmer Dan Hromas turned to us for help with a new pastured poultry operation in York, Nebraska. He used the resources we suggested for land, financing, and information. His hens are impeccably cared for; Dan is an expert on humanely raised hens.
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013

Our expertise now draws over 14,000 beginners to our website each month. We corresponded with 280 beginners throughout the year.

Marine veteran and new farmer Garrett Dwyer taped our first public service announcement for beginning farmer support. It aired on radio stations across Nebraska.

Latino farmers learned about farm finances and attended 10 tours (from dairy to vegetables). Nine talked with USDA about their first farm loans.

“Farm Dreams” workshops attracted passionate and driven Women Beginning Farmers eager to launch new farms.

PHOTO BY WYATT FRAAS
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013

❖ Showed community members how they can help site new energy projects

❖ Published America’s Power Plan and developed better ways for utilities to compensate landowners

❖ Held community listening sessions and moved Nebraska toward a clean energy economy

❖ Testified in support of new transmission lines in 4 different states

❖ Found strong leaders in a 6 state region supportive of climate action

Center for Rural Affairs
The Board of the Center for Rural Affairs showed their opposition to the Keystone XL Pipeline in Nebraska. They don’t shy away from leading the discussion on renewable energy, and neither do you! With your support, we were able to analyze and advocate for a new clean energy future.

This year we grew. From coal to clean energy, we are working to help small towns and rural communities engage in clean energy topics. We listened to your feedback – from the Midwest to the coasts – to help guide our growing portfolio.

You told us eminent domain matters in new energy projects. So we explored what can be done to avoid it. And we also came up with creative ways to make sure landowners get their fair share when new transmission projects are built.

For the first time we started to talk about coal. Center supporters from all over helped us raise money to start this program, and we’re moving ahead at full speed. Moving away from coal means a healthy, clean environment and strong, thriving small towns as we begin producing energy with the resources we have in our own backyard.

Don’t forget about climate change. As our weather becomes more and more unpredictable, the consequences grow. This year we partnered with rural leaders across America to speak out and take action. Whether you’re a farmer, rancher, rural leader, or concerned citizen, we’re committed to working with you to make a difference.

There’s no question, 2013 was a big year for our energy team. We expect even greater things in 2014.
YOUNG GARDENERS SHOW OFF THEIR NEW GARDEN GLOVES, READY TO DIG IN! COMMUNITY GARDENS ESTABLISH ROOTS WHERE NONE HAVE GROWN FOR YEARS, AND SCHOOL CHILDREN CAN ENJOY LOCAL, HEALTHY FOODS AT LUNCH. YOU ARE HELPING TO BRING LASTING CHANGE TO SMALL TOWNS!

Local food is a hot topic, and your support helped farmers and buyers “eat local” in Nebraska. The Farm to School Program brings local, healthy food into school cafeterias. It connects children with their food and its source.

In 2013, our first statewide Farm to School Summit brought enthusiastic farmers and food service directors together. It was a big success with several deals to provide local foods taking place right there. Marketing students at the University of Nebraska-Kearney created a social media campaign for our Farm to School program.

The excitement continued when a group of middle school students spoke at the National Farm to School Conference in Omaha. These 7th and 8th grade girls from Bellevue, Nebraska, decided they wanted to change their school meals. Now, with a little help from us, farmers are interested in helping them eat fresh, local food at school. We’re excited that two new grants will help expand these efforts in 2014.

Your support leads to real-world changes. That’s so with the farmers market you helped start in South Sioux City. After a 2nd successful year, management transitioned to the City. The Santee Nation and Omaha Tribe are becoming more informed gardeners with classes and instruction. Expanded community gardens and farmers markets will result.

With your help, Latino gardeners and city officials broke ground on a new community garden in Columbus. Gardeners are attending workshops on how to make their gardens more successful and productive.

Communities in central Nebraska are learning how to manage flower and vegetable gardens for pollinator habitats. This increases garden and farm production, as well as attracts tourists.
Amy Hughes inspects a milkweed plant for monarch butterfly eggs at the Taylor Butterfly Garden. Up and down Nebraska’s Loup Rivers Scenic Byway, people are learning how gardens can preserve habitat and encourage the pollinators that are so essential to our food supply.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013**

- Statewide Farm to School Summit brought enthusiastic farmers and food service directors together.

- New gardeners in Columbus eagerly await spring to start planting their community garden.

- Provided information and training to farmers, food service directors, and community members to learn more about the business and food safety aspects of local food sales.

Photo by Waytt Fraas
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2013

For efforts to promote and encourage health insurance coverage, the Center was named a “CHAMPION OF COVERAGE” by the federal government because of your support.

People turned to us for ACCURATE INFORMATION on rural health care and the rural implications of the Affordable Care Act: 57 national media outlets, nearly 500 state and regional media references.

Produced 7 more reports on rural care and the Affordable Care Act in our rural health care series.

You helped make Nebraska one of the top states in the nation for health insurance plans sold on the health insurance marketplace versus the first three month goal.
YOU EXPECT US TO TAKE ON TOUGH ISSUES, THE ONES THAT SHAPE THE DESTINY OF SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES. HEALTH CARE IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE.

With your help, we fought to extend Medicaid so that people who need health insurance can afford it. Our rural organizer, Virginia, joined others on the capitol steps in Lincoln, Nebraska, to relay that message.

In 2013, work on rural health care policy moved to the next stage of fighting to see the new law’s rollout served rural America. In Nebraska and Montana we advocated for expansion of the Medicaid program for low-income people. Thousands of rural residents in both states would benefit. The health care provider network would grow stronger, benefiting small towns and rural communities.

Unfortunately, both states declined to expand Medicaid, though the decision was close. Now the fight continues – a potential ballot initiative in Montana and in the 2014 legislative session in Nebraska.

The new health insurance marketplaces took center stage as well. We took our analysis on what it means for rural people and rural communities right to you. In public sessions throughout the region, our health care team answered your questions calmly and factually. More sessions are planned for 2014.

The health care needs of the rural United States are many, and the public policy to meet those needs challenging. In many ways the new law was tailor-made to meet rural needs, but unique rural circumstances continue to test it. As an organization dedicated to the needs of rural people and rural communities and to the moral imperative of health care for all, we will continue to confront those tests.
You gave voice to rural America!

Total Revenue: $3,460,531

- 46% - Private Grants
- 7% - Your Gifts
- 8% - Fees & Microloan Interest
- 39% - Government Grants

*You'll find our most recent audited financial statements at cfra.org/public_disclosure.
Pollinators – honey bees, butterflies, flies, wasps – create over $20 billion in crops each year. Thanks to a new grant, you are helping preserve and extend local habitat for pollinators.

**DONOR TIERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DONOR TIER</th>
<th>TOTAL GIVEN</th>
<th>GIVEN BY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPORTER</strong></td>
<td>$38,796</td>
<td>1,008 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to $99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADVOCATE</strong></td>
<td>$48,656</td>
<td>390 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100 to 249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIONEER</strong></td>
<td>$22,141</td>
<td>73 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250 to 499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INNOVATOR</strong></td>
<td>$20,640</td>
<td>36 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500 to 999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENTREPRENEUR</strong></td>
<td>$24,883</td>
<td>20 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000 to $2,499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VISIONARY</strong></td>
<td>$20,276</td>
<td>7 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,500 to $4,999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VANGUARD</strong></td>
<td>$82,141</td>
<td>4 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000 &amp; over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL GIVEN</strong></td>
<td>$257,533</td>
<td>1,538 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo by Wyatt Fraas
FAST FORWARD TO 2014

SMALL BUSINESS - As a Community Development Financial Institution, we’ll be able to offer more services to small businesses and small towns.

ADVOCACY - With your help, we’ll fight for conservation, beginning farmers and ranchers, rural entrepreneurs, and small town issues.

FAMILY FARMING & RANCHING - New farmers will get a step-up on the resources needed to be successful.

ENERGY - Our energy team will hit the road to talk to you, farmers, ranchers, and rural leaders, about steps to address climate change.

FOOD SYSTEMS - Pollinator gardens will start in 10 communities and community gardens and farmers markets will keep growing.

COMMUNITY - As rural America grows more diverse, we’re gearing up our work to create inclusive and welcoming communities.

HEALTH CARE - We’ll fight to make sure health care reform works for you. Count on us as your trusted source of rural health information.
YOUR LEGACY.  
OUR FUTURE.

A new project within our Granary Foundation will allow us to step up our commitment to helping the next generation of farmers get established while promoting a land and family farm ethic.

Interested donors will have the ability to donate farmland that will be held by our Granary Foundation. We will manage the land with your ethic in mind, making it available for rent or sale to qualified beginners on attractive terms.

The new program will help beginners gain access to farmland, promote the land and community ethic at the core of the Center, and return revenue to support the Center.

It is a win, win, win – for donors interested in securing their legacy, for beginning farmers, and for the long-term sustainability of the Center.

For more information, please contact Hank Rohling, 402.687.2103 ext 1009 or hankr@cfra.org.

YOUR ACTION.  
YOUR SUPPORT.

The Center for Rural Affairs brings your voice together with those of tens of thousands of rural citizens to contact key policymakers on a broad range of critical rural issues before Congress.

Together we are a force for change in small towns. We speak together for genuine opportunity and a better future for rural people. Because this is core to the Center, we asked many of you to make special investments to increase our reach.

To date, 316 donors have given 394 gifts totaling $198,011 to help us expand our network. In the last year you helped us:

- Increase the number of active supporters by almost 12%, a gain of nearly 3,000 people.
- Increase the total donations to the Center by more than 166 donors and $25,000.
- Strengthen our online presence and increase communications coordination to convey a consistent message.

Thank you for your generous support. Without help from you and other donors like you, the Center could not continue to be the leading national voice on rural policy issues. You are vital to our shared success, and our gratitude cannot be expressed enough.