



## SANDOVAL HAS LED THE LATINO BUSINESS CENTER FOR 7 YEARS

BY JUAN SANDOVAL, LATINO BUSINESS CENTER DIRECTOR, JUANS@CFRA.ORG

For 13 years, the Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) has operated the Latino Business Center (LBC). Two directors have led the LBC, starting with Adriana Dungan in 2005. In 2010, leadership transitioned to me.

Nancy Flock, Griselda Rendon, and former employee Imelda Catalan have worked as loan specialists serving entrepreneurs in southeast, central, and western Nebraska.

REAP believes in its work with Latino entrepreneurs in rural Nebraska.

### LOANS

In 2011, LBC placed 9 loans to businesses. That number grew to 59 loans in 2017.

From 2014 to 2017, 146 loans were awarded to Latino business.

In the last five years, 185 loans



Juan Sandoval

were placed with Latino businesses.

Lending capacity improved from \$149,500 in 2011 to \$1,032,295 in 2017.

Loans in the amount of \$2,086,395 were placed in the last three years.

Loans in the amount of

\$2,672,795 were committed in the last six years.

### COUNSELING AND TRAINING

The number of clients trained and counseled went from 891 in

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## ARTIST, CRAFTSMAN, HISTORIAN: ONE CARPENTER, MANY PASSIONS

BY DENA BECK, SENIOR PROJECT LEADER & SOUTH CENTRAL LOAN SPECIALIST, DENAB@CFRA.ORG

“Right man, right place, right time,” said Armando “Al” Leal, president of Al’s Old House Repair, LLC.

His historic carpentry and renovation business landed him in the “right place” of Red Cloud, Nebraska, a town with fewer than 1,000 people.

Leal has come a long way since returning to his hometown of

Clear Lake, Iowa, after serving in the military. He joined the family business with nothing more than a borrowed saw and a pair of pliers.

Clear Lake to Corpus Christi, Texas, to Red Cloud was the route Leal’s family took to find a place rich in history. The business now includes his sons making up the fourth generation.

Al’s Old House Repair is not your typical carpentry business.

“Restoring history one board at a time,” is their motto, and Leal stays true to that statement.

Extensive research goes into each project. For various projects, he has made visits to the Nebraska Historical Society and the Willa Cather Foundation archives.

Last year, Leal reached out to Dena Beck, senior project leader

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# CARPENTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

with Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP), for assistance.

"Working with Al was different than the clients I had worked with before," Beck said. "His work not only supports his family and creates jobs, but also preserves a living history of Willa Cather and her time in Red Cloud. Seeing his work in varying stages is amazing and inspiring."

Leal received a microloan from REAP to expand his business. Al and his wife have also worked through the REAP Women's Business Center to utilize bookkeeping assistance to help streamline operations.

In 2016, Leal began work on the Matthew R. Bentley/Wick Cutter House, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of Red Cloud's Seward Street Historic District. The house is also separately listed as an important Cather site. Plans are to complete the Bentley house in summer 2018.

"Red Cloud saw many immigrants when the town was formed, and you can appreciate that with the architecture: Italian, Victorian, Gothic, Spanish, and German," Leal said. "Salvage is the ultimate goal, followed by replacing pieces



Armando "Al" Leal, owner of Al's Old House Repair, shows original wood at the Katy House, a bed and breakfast in Red Cloud, Nebraska. He completed exterior and interior restorations from 2010 to 2013. | Photo submitted

from the same period, then painstaking, but rewarding, recreation, which few, if any, people can differentiate from the original."

Twenty years ago, he discovered that restoration work tapped into his professional carpentry skills complementing his interest in research, history, and replicating the fine craftsmanship of early immigrants. The work revealed a passion for historic restoration.

"Houses tell a story," Leal said.

"I sometimes think these beautiful, yet neglected, homes and buildings speak to me and tell me what they need to be revived to their former glory. These pieces of history need to be saved."

## AL'S OLD HOUSE REPAIR

804 North Seward Street  
Red Cloud, NE 68970  
402.746.0564

[www.alsoldhouserepair.com](http://www.alsoldhouserepair.com)

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# LENDING CAPITAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ment Corporation includes expanded small business lending as well as exploration of lending in other sectors of need in rural places.

Small business loans up to \$150,000 are available through the Rural Investment Corporation to small businesses in rural Nebraska. Visit [www.cfra.org/reap](http://www.cfra.org/reap) for more information on lending services.

Although this is the Rural In-

vestment Corporation's first award for lending capital, the Center for Rural Affairs received awards from the CDFI Fund in the past, including \$123,044 in 2015 for technical assistance to support capacity through evaluation of market opportunities and product expansion; and \$100,000 in 2012 to work toward CDFI certification and increase capital access for small business owners throughout rural Nebraska.



Presenter Diane Siefkes gives a “Facebook for Business” training in Central City. The session was presented by the Center for Rural Affairs’ REAP Women’s Business Center and local organizations. | Photo by Monica Braun

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REAP WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER

# WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER KICKS OFF 16TH YEAR

BY MONICA BRAUN, WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER DIRECTOR, MONIGAB@CFRA.ORG

**R**ural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) Women’s Business Center is kicking off its 16th year as a program of the Center for Rural Affairs.

We continue to partner with local organizations to offer learning opportunities throughout the state.

Recently, “Online Marketing Strategies” sessions were held in

Hebron and Central City, with sessions scheduled for Plattsmouth and Wood River in the near future.

“Facebook for Business” was offered in Central City, and “Top Ten LinkedIn Tips” was held in Lincoln in collaboration with Community Development Resources.

A key to business success is accurate and timely recordkeeping. QuickBooks sessions were held in Walthill, Scottsbluff, Norfolk,

Atkinson, Kimball, Chadron, and Ainsworth. Sessions are planned for Neligh, Red Cloud, and O’Neill.

A “Business Plan Basics” course was offered in Loup City in cooperation with the Central Nebraska Economic Development District and Sherman County Economic Development.

Two “Sales/Use Taxes” sessions were held in Beatrice in September.

## SANDOVAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

2011 to 1,335 in 2017.

In the last three years, 3,357 Latinos have been trained or counseled.

In the last six years, 6,161 Latinos have been trained or counseled.

### PROGRAMS OFFERED

- New American Loan Fund, a private fund designated to help Latinos who are not able to qualify for traditional loans or federal loans;
- Credit builder loan;

- Credit booster program; and
- Alice Integrity Loan Fund.

### OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

REAP received \$950,000 in 2015 to implement the New American Loan Fund. Our goal is to raise \$5 million by 2025.

This growth is managed by only two Latino loan specialists.

As I transition to a new career starting Jan. 1, 2018, I extend my gratitude to the Center for Rural Affairs staff and board, our cli-

ents, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, the Small Business Administration, U.S.

Department of Agriculture, many economic development and chamber of commerce offices across the state, city staff members, and many colleagues who support and believe in the work I developed for a number of years.

Here is the strong foundation for the next generations to take over.

THANK YOU,  
Juan Sandoval



## CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

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Fall 2017



**'Houses tell a story' -Armando 'Al' Leal**  
See page 1 to read about Al's Old House Repair

### QUESTIONS? CONTACT OUR STAFF

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# \$665,000 MORE AVAILABLE IN LENDING CAPITAL

BY BRIAN DEPEW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & INTERIM REAP DIRECTOR, [BRIAND@CFRA.ORG](mailto:BRIAND@CFRA.ORG)

Recently, we learned of a \$665,000 grant awarded to our Rural Investment Corporation for lending capital. The Rural Investment Corporation is our subsidiary that is certified as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

The award comes from the U.S. Department of Treasury CDFI Fund. This was our first ever application to the CDFI Fund for loan capital. We were among 303 CDFIs who were awarded \$208.7 million to increase lending and investment activity in low-income and economically-distressed communities across the nation.

We won the award in a very competitive field where applications

far exceeded dollars available. This award will provide attractive lending capital for small business lending in rural Nebraska.

CDFI financing lags in Nebraska, and especially in rural Nebraska. To answer this need, we created the Rural Investment Corporation and were certified in 2013. Since then, more than \$5.7 million has been loaned through the CDFI.

In a world facing increased capital concentration, community led efforts to rebalance the scales of capital are increasingly important to building inclusive and vibrant communities. That's what this work is about.

The future of the Rural Invest