



Glacial Lakes area ILLUSTRATES the POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

When people pull together, communities, counties and regions are transformed. One of the most dramatic examples of the power of partnership in South Dakota is in the northeastern corner of the state. Glacial Lakes Area Development (GLAD) has utilized resources made available by South Dakota Rural Enterprise and community development partners to create a dynamic program with a paid executive director, economic development strategies and four of the first eight Dakota Rising Rural Entrepreneur Fellows.

The LeadershipPlenty program of SD Rural Enterprise is given credit for being one of the major events that led to the founding of GLAD. At the time, the Rural Learning Center was working on a regional economic development project to create a community assessment/profile. One goal was to hire the first regional economic development director to be a catalyst for resources and community collaborations. LeadershipPlenty was instrumental in creating an opportunity for individuals from communities in Day and Marshall Counties to talk about the future of the area while receiving an applied leadership development training.

This was a great capacity-building tool for the pre-GLAD initiative because many of the classmates became highly engaged in the next steps of the Rural Learning Center program, "Growing Our Own." The last regional community meeting was led by LeadershipPlenty facilitator Linda Salmonson and Rural Learning Center Director, Jim Beddow. It resulted in an unanimous decision to work together and start Glacial Lakes Area Development after an immense investment of time by several community leaders organizing the purpose and mission, as well as leveraging financial resources to support it.

"WE CAN'T SAY ENOUGH ABOUT THE STRONG BASE (OF PARTNERSHIPS) WE DEVELOPED BECAUSE OF THE PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY SOUTH DAKOTA RURAL ENTERPRISE. STRONG PARTNERSHIPS ARE THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS IN RURAL SOUTH DAKOTA."

Paula Jensen, GLAD Board Chair.

"Partnership made it all happen," said Darah Darrington, LeadershipPlenty graduate and currently Community Innovation & Leadership Educator for the SD Cooperative Extension Service in Marshall County. "Local leaders did the organizing, planning and financial tasks. Communities financed GLAD for economic development support, NESDCAP/NESDEC partnered with GLAD to help leverage grant funding for the position and they continue to connect GLAD to State and Federal funding partners for economic development. Additional support from the Cooperative Extension Service and SD Rural Enterprise keep us connected to programming and help with funding resources."



Scott Amundson moved his family back home to the area to become the GLAD executive director. The organization was immediately challenged with limited resources and a need to connect with the communities to provide vital economic development programming and tools. The Creating a Value-Added Community (CVAC) program administered by SD Rural Enterprise enabled the group to engage community leaders in a process of learning about rural economic development models and discussing an implementation plan as a regional community. This course had participants involved from eight communities, all from Day, Marshall and Roberts Counties. The social networking, new knowledge and planning resulted in a motivated group of leaders interested in taking part of regional initiatives they discovered could be successful here. The challenge again was limited financial resources and research to take this new knowledge to a tangible project.

SD Rural Enterprise's Dakota Rising program provided the next opportunity for Glacial Lakes Area Development and the Creating a Value Added Community (CVAC) group. Dakota Rising was a tangible initiative with measurable results for the whole region to enhance business development. The CVAC group applied for a Dakota Rising grant to cultivate prosperous entrepreneurs. By utilizing GLAD, SWO Planning Department and SD Cooperative Extension in the initial application to reach out and connect with more stakeholders in entrepreneurship development, the group achieved its goal. The CVAC group expanded to include more community leaders and continued to hold meetings well after the CVAC graduation as a newly formed Resource Team for the Glacial Lakes Dakota Rising Site. They created a strategic plan to meet the Dakota Rising program expectations and guidelines, including planning an Entrepreneurship Fair, recruiting business developers to apply for a \$10,000 Fellowship for business growth, and continuing to think of new ways to work together to support and cultivate entrepreneurship. GLAD has also created new programs with supportive partners in the area, like business education, networking socials and a business planning course.

Glacial Lakes Dakota Rising was awarded four of the eight statewide \$10,000 Dakota Rising Rural Fellowships, offering great resources and training to area business owners and a great monetary stimulus to help improve their businesses as well as improving themselves personally and professionally.

"So much has happened as a result of these programs," Darrington said. "New economic development programs have been brought to the area from SD Rural Enterprise and USDA Rural Development. Several networking and partnering opportunities have sprung up across the region. New money was brought into the community through grant dollars secured and great programs initiated for community leaders and business developers. It's been amazing!"