



**VOLUNTEER** Wade Krien is lying down on the job during this November work date. Really he was screeding off a drain area in the emergency medical technician side of St. Francis's new KAN STEP building. Quite a contraption but it worked great and only took a few minutes to put together. The building steel was scheduled to be delivered in December.

## St. Francis KAN STEP project reviewed

*Editor's note: The following article appeared in The Kansas Lifeline, a publication of the Kansas Rural Water Association. Written by Shane Holthaus, a KAN STEP technician who had spent some time in St. Francis working with the many volunteers who had erected and worked on the St. Francis Emergency Building. He commends the community, the area and the people and is well worth reprinting in The Saint Francis Herald.*

### St. Francis — working in the extreme!

On March 14, 2006, St. Francis, population 1,400, was awarded a KAN STEP grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce to construct a new fire and emergency medical service station.

St. Francis is located in Cheyenne County in the extreme northwest corner of the state. There are a lot of the typical small town Kansas activities in Cheyenne County. It is also one of the most beautiful and unique areas in Kansas.

St. Francis is the Cheyenne County seat. The County Historical Museum, located on the south side of U.S. 36, is packed full of local history. It has a display of frontier Kansas history and an archaeological display showing how the area progressed over the last several thousand years.

A peaceful, half-mile-long, tree-shaded river walk meanders along the Republican River in St. Francis and is a great place to walk the dog or ride a bike, even during the hottest part of the summer.

The Arikaree Breaks located in northern Cheyenne County are well worth the short trip from St. Francis to take a look. This natural wonder is an area of extremely rough terrain, with its deep ravines and gullies, is a marked contrast to the plains generally associated with the surrounding country. The Breaks are 36-miles long and approximately 2- to 3-miles wide. The Breaks are included on the preliminary list of "8 Wonders of Kansas" by the Kansas Sampler Foundation.

When a community's television news and weather forecasts come from a Denver station, it really is western Kansas!

St. Francis residents regularly hear comments by neighbors that eastern Kansans consider Hays to be extreme western Kansas. Well, when a St. Francis resident lives another four hours west from Hays on the road to Colorado — that's what "extreme" means around here.

On our visits to St. Francis, we've definitely noticed this and will not get mixed up on directions and descriptions again!

### The project gets off the ground

The first work was completed on the St. Francis KAN STEP project in the spring of 2006. It was clearing a few trees in order for the dirt work to begin. By the time the bids were received and the contracts were signed and returned by the suppliers it was time to begin.

The first concrete was poured on Sept. 29, 2006, after trenching the footings and doing the backhoe work for the column supports. The overall dimensions of the St. Francis building project are 80 feet by 140 feet for a total of 11,200 square feet of usable floor space.

With the footings complete the rough-in plumbing came next. The building includes three fire bay doors and a two-door bay for emergency medical technician service. The fire truck and emergency medical technician bay areas also have a trough drain and there is storage above the many additional rooms. The building's additional rooms include meeting, kitchen, restrooms, file storage rooms, separate emergency medical technician and fire station offices and an emergency preparedness office. Cheyenne County Emergency Preparedness coordinator Gary Rogers and project volunteer commented about the construction, "It is going to be really nice to have an efficient, more spacious office and workspace."

The first floor concrete was poured on Oct. 30, 2006. Other pours were finished within the next week. The concrete work was completed just in time because of the unexpected blizzard that hit western Kansas in December.

### Blizzard causes delay

The snow storm was a drought buster for an area that had been dry for eight years but the unwelcome effects of that snow and ice storm lasted well into 2007. The rough winter weather brought other delays as well but the volunteers kept their spirits up and realized there would be a lot of catch-up work to do.

"After all, the building is not small by any means," Mayor Scott Schultz said. "Look at the size of your building and then

realize the hours it will take to build it. A little time in between isn't always a bad thing on a building this big," he added.

In the following months, the red iron and tin were completed in two phases. While waiting to install the roof on the building, a crew of ambitious St. Francis volunteers built walls for the interior rooms off-site and hauled them to the building for erection after the roof was finished. This creative thinking saved the project from needing a time extension from the Department of Commerce.

Although St. Francis will be pushing the finish date of March 14 a little, all of the material will be purchased and only a few minor details will need to be finished. One example of a weather delay is the stone masonry work on the front of the building that cannot be completed while the weather is so cold. Finishing it will have to wait until it warms a little.

Many projects start off like gangbusters but few can sustain the increased frenzy of activity during an entire project. St. Francis is no exception.

The winter of 06-07 brought 15 feet snowdrifts from the over 30 inches of snow. Over 8,000 power poles were downed and 44 western Kansas counties were immediately declared a disaster area by Governor Sebelius.

With roads impassable, western states National Guard aircraft were brought in to assist Kansas Air Guard units in dropping hay for starving livestock. Auxiliary power units from the Guard and every supplier in the region were called on to keep water and wastewater systems in operation. Businesses were closed because employees were not able to get out of their drive-

ways as many were stranded in their homes. The snow blanketed the western Kansas counties for nearly three months. This disaster was a huge delay because the St. Francis project had only the building foundation and floor concrete poured. While waiting on building material to be delivered the weather moved in and didn't let up, sending the project well into 2007.

"When it snows that much there are plenty of other issues to take care of," Mayor Schultz explained. "Some of the volunteers were stranded away from town because of the weather, older folks were not able to make it out to help, farmers stayed away because chores took most of the morning and they had their own problems to deal with the rest of the day."

### Volunteer updates

Mayor Schultz summed up feelings on the project that are shared by St. Francis volunteers.

"We are holding our own. This project is just like a business; you will have peaks and valleys. We could not do this project without the KAN STEP program. It is a really good tool for communities like ours," he said.

In my five years at KRWA, working with KAN STEP, my belief in rural community volunteerism could not be stronger, said Mr. Holthaus. Volunteerism is a great tool and has a great history in Kansas.

In St. Francis I've also found another "extreme," and it is a word that describes the people of the community and the way they work. When they can, they work sun-up to sundown; it's the way they get things done. It's the way a community can get through a three-month-long tough snowy winter and then finish a com-

munity project on time. **Project details**

The Kansas Department of Commerce \$390,300 grant covered building material costs, architectural fees, grant administration costs and inspection and technical assistance to volunteers. The facility has an estimated retail cost of \$737,970. Volunteer labor on the project is valued at \$347,670. To date, a total of 11,213 volunteer hours have been spent by St. Francis volunteers on the project.

Dan Hall, BG Consultants of Manhattan is the architect. Grant administration is provided by Michelle Kieffer of Northwest Kansas Planning and Development.

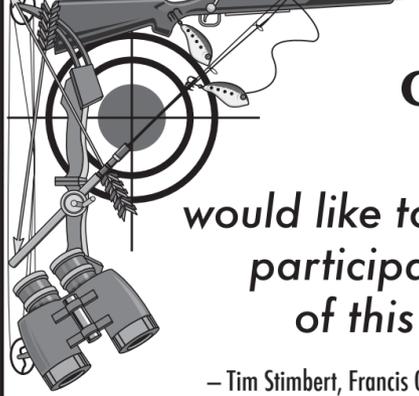
The volunteer "sparkplugs" for the project are St. Francis City Council member Dale Weeks and St. Francis City superintendent J.R. Landenberger. Kansas Rural Water Association is providing inspection services and technical assistance to the volunteers.

KAN STEP is a self-help program that enables small communities to make major infrastructure improvements. Local people volunteer labor and services or "sweat equity," while the Kansas Department of Commerce provides funding for materials and technical services. An acronym for Kansas Small Towns Environment Program, KAN STEP gives small Kansas communities an opportunity to do projects they couldn't otherwise afford. The funding is provided through the federal Community Development Block Grant program.



### Registered Nurse

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would like to thank the contributors,  
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of this year's banquet.

— Tim Stimbert, Francis O'Leary, Gordon Ross, Dustin Gilliland, Duane Wilkens,  
Hal Sager, Richard Walters, Kyle Schultz and Martin Hilt

### WRAY COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR

**Blood Draw Dates:** March 24 – April 16th 6:00–9:30am @ Wray Hospital - (except March 27<sup>th</sup>, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and April 8<sup>th</sup>)  
**Idalia** Visions March 27<sup>th</sup>, April 3<sup>rd</sup> & April 8<sup>th</sup>, 7:00-9:30am  
May take normal medications prior to test  
Fast for 12 hours (but **DRINK** plenty of water!)

**Cost:** \$25.00 – Chem Panel (glucose, blood count, electrolytes, thyroid & more)  
\$15.00 – PSA (prostate blood test for men)

**Fair Date:** April 19th @ the WRAC 8:00am – 12:00pm

Call for a Blood draw appointment: 332-4811  
(Appointments are Highly Encouraged)  
Call for any questions 970-332-2245

Jennifer Kramer-RN, Lynn Clapper-RN, Holly Johnson-RN, Mary Gelvin-LPN

### Club Clip

#### St. Francis Lions Club

President Dennis Merklin opened the March 10 meeting of the St. Francis Lions Club at the Windmill Restaurant. After the pledge of allegiance, Marvin Zimbelman gave the invocation. There were 18 members present. Laura Reeser and Dorothy Kellner had reports.

Committee reports included Francis O'Leary saying he had taken two wheelchairs to Burlington for refurbishment and Dick Rohweder reported on the District cabinet meeting in Colby. He moved that St. Francis delegates approve the increase for the district dues to \$7 per year.

Elmer Kellner and Mr. Rohweder reported on the Disaster Management workshop which they attended representing the Lions. They learned how to train workers and lead volunteer teams to help with emergency situations. They encouraged members to become involved when needed.

Mrs. Kellner said the ballots were ready for the election and Mr. Kellner mentioned the next Joining Hands project will be this spring.

There was a discussion about the handicap equipment and the room where it is stored at the courthouse. Rueben Schultz, Mr. Zimbelman and Mr. O'Leary volunteered to clean the room and dispose of any equipment which was no longer usable. They were given complete authority to do what was needed. A request was made that the club buy two new chairs as well as get the two chairs repaired. Mr. O'Leary said he would see that it was done.

Mr. Kellner nominated Mr. Rohweder and Norman Morrow as delegates for the District meeting in Dighton on April 12. They will be voting members and Mr. Kellner and Milton Lampe will also be going to the meeting.

Mr. Kellner suggested and Mr. Rohweder second the idea that each member again be contacted and asked to give at least \$6 to the Sight First II Campaign and it was agreed Mr. Kellner should call each member. The money would pay to restore the sight for a blind person in another country.

The president read a letter from he hospital asking if the Lions wanted to have a booth at the Health Fair on April 10. Mrs. Kellner agreed to head up an Education Committee and arrange for volunteers to get materials together and present them at the Fair. Clarence Iliff said the club still has 75 magnets that could be given away at the fair.

Mr. Rohweder asked that members consider buying Sharps containers for diabetic persons to use to dispose of their sharps. He was asked to find out how much the containers cost and report back at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

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