

Photos from the fair parade —



FIRST NATIONAL BANK won the commercial division in the Cheyenne County Fair Parade held Aug. 6. Pictured are (l to r) Kodi Workman, Janet Jensen, Myra Douthit and Jo Rogers (driving).

County resident gets scholarship to attend session

The 2011 gathering of the National Rural Assembly "Building an Inclusive Nation", was held in the Twin Cities, Minn., June 28 - 30.

As a resident of a rural community, Mallory Knodel, St. Francis resident, was given a scholarship to attend sessions specifically on rural broadband policy and local philanthropic initiatives.

There were many diverse topics discussed for the first two days, such as education grants, healthcare, broadband initiatives and policies, entrepreneurship, youth voices, infrastructure development, immigration reform, the Farm Bill, and affordable housing. The final day featured workshops to actually build skills for policy work, community sustainability, social media, and many more.

The many important and inspiring speakers throughout the week continuously resounded the importance of rural America and of the uniqueness of the present political climate globally. During the smaller pre-conference event, the Midwest Rural Assembly, a participant noted that "The world is in crisis and in times of crisis, some of the best ideas are thought up."

The initiative to "Build An Inclusive Nation," a nation of equality between those in rural and urban places, requires work on all fronts. Creating narratives and changing the messaging about the importance of rural America is needed. For example, "How do we change the role of urban universities beyond "Big Ag" and convincing kids not to go back to their hometown?" was the topic of discussion in one Midwest Rural Assembly gathering.

Positive messages about rural life were shared.

"I don't seem to worry about crime my rural community because we take care of our own," said a Minnesota policy maker in one small group session. "We tend to collaborate; we don't have any choice."

"After all, this is a rural country; almost everyone is two generations or fewer from being behind a plow," said another participant.

Some of the discussions that Ms. Knodel was a part of and found most interesting included:

- **Entrepreneurship:** The discussion focused on how to create safety nets for business that struggle in small towns.

- **Broadband:** Internet access is like the railroad in rural places. If the railroad didn't go to your town, then your town probably didn't survive;

- **Philanthropy:** New legislation called the Rural Philanthropy Growth Act will likely become part of the Farm Bill renewal next year helping small town community funds to prosper.

- **Native communities:** Traci Morris of Native Public Media in Flagstaff, Ariz., told participants that Native nation building is tribal sovereignty in action, and highlighted an inspiring, community-owned broadband project in Idaho.

As one would expect, Mallory said, references to budget cuts and the recession were present in almost every discussion. For many states it is predicted that sectors up against tax cuts are water and waste water, healthcare and housing.

Despite threats of underfunded programs, the gathering was very optimistic, she said. On the opening night, a musical presentation by Billy Altom, Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living in Little Rock, Ark., had the whole ballroom full of participants singing "Country Roads" by John Denver after his very moving "Truth to Power" speech about disability access to rural transportation.

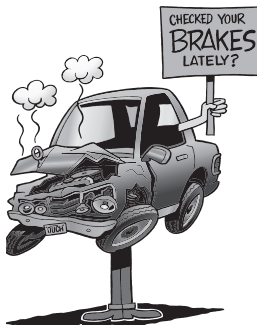
There was a lot of hometown pride in St. Paul that week, she said, from about 300 folks from all over the nation. I was really proud to be there representing St. Francis, USA.



ALEXIS ZIMBELMAN enjoyed her sucker as she rode through the parade with her dad, Clay Zimbelman.
Herald staff photo by Leslie McCormick

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CONGRATULATIONS, Mom and Dad (and grandpa and grandma) on your 60th wedding anniversary on August 19, 2011.

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