

# Making it count day for Census coming April 1

**By Tom Betz**  
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 For the 23rd time in the country's history citizens of the United States will be asked to fill out a Census Bureau form to count everyone in the country, and April 1 is the official count day this year.

Every 10 years — as required by the U.S. Constitution (Article 1, Section 2) — every American household receives a form to be filled out and returned to help count everyone in the city, county, state and nation.

Over the years how the census count is taken has changed as in 1790 each county sheriff was sent out on horseback to knock on doors and take the official count. Until 75 years ago everyone got a knock on the door to be counted.

With more than 300 million people in the country today it is not realistic, but over the past year representatives from the U.S. Census have gone to every house in every town and county and taken a photo of the homes to be tied into the Global Positioning

System. Based on the reports there are 3,184 homes in Sherman County.

This year the Census Bureau is asking citizens to answer 10 questions, and there is no long form. The 10-question forms will be mailed in February and March, and are to be returned by Census Day on April 1. Forms are not being mailed to people with post office boxes and people who have a post office box can pick up a form at the Goodland Public Library and possibly in Kanorado, or will be delivered by hand after April 1.

The constitutional reason for counting everyone every 10 years is to determine the boundaries and number of Congressional representatives for each state. Kansas has four Congressmen, and it is important to get a good count to be sure the state gets that number of representatives.

The state, counties, cities, school districts, hospitals, fire districts and other special districts are tied to the census results as the numbers are used in determining who gets

more than \$400 billion in federal grants tied to the information gathered in the census.

Sherman County was about average across the state of Kansas returning 65 percent of the census forms in 2000 when the last census was taken. The highest return rate for Kansas was 78 percent in three counties with two in the western part of the state, Gray County and McPherson County, and Johnson County in the eastern part of the state. Most of the counties in the northeast portion were in the 70 percent range, but most of the western counties were in the mid to low 60 percent range.

The goal of the U.S. Census is to raise the county and country return percentage this year getting it closer to the 85 to 90 percent range. For Sherman County that would be getting census forms returned from about 2,710 homes.

The census is hiring people to answer questions, and to have workers knock on doors of homes where forms have not been returned by April 1.

In Sherman County a question and answer station will be set up at the Goodland Public Library and possibly at the city administration building. The library and city administration office locations will have a census worker who will be able to handle questions and provide replacement forms if needed. The Sherman County sites, including Kanorado will be available to collect filled out census forms.

City Manager Doug Gerber was part of a small meeting Thursday held at Northwest Tech Student Union to talk about the census and said he knows the census numbers are important for the city in looking to the future. He said having as high a count as possible will help the city when applying for state and federal money.

The census representative for western Kansas, Lech A. Wisniewski, said some people are concerned about giving the information to the government, but he said it is information held in confidence and filling out the form is required under the provision

in the constitution.

He said census workers will knock on the doors of houses where forms have not been returned several times in an attempt to collect the information. He said the effort will continue through the spring until July.

Census data is released to the President and Congress in December, and to the public, but the data does not give out any individual information. The census data is to be delivered to the states by March of next year for redistricting purposes.

Wisniewski said each 10-year census data base is kept confidential for a period of 72 years before it is released. Once released the information can be researched for genealogy and historical purposes. The most recent census data base released to the public was from 1930, and it will be 2012 before the 1940 census data is released.

Wisniewski said he is available to speak to organizations about the census and can be reached by phone at (785) 218-7060 or e-mail at lech.a.wisniewski@census.gov.

## Micro loan approved for repairs

COUNTY, from Page 1

loans were not sent a monthly statement, but since she has been handling these the businesses have received a monthly statement.

She said the original five were taken to the county attorney when they were in default.

Selby said she thought the county treasurer was keeping a book.

Dechant said there was a deadline to get the first ones done. He agreed with the deadline the committee may not have scrutinized the loans as closely.

Thomas asked if the loans given out since the first ones have been scrutinized closer.

Dechant said when the committee handles them now they are closer on what is given out.

Dobbs said some of the ones in default have paid when they got a letter from the county attorney.

Thomas asked how much is in the

fund down, and Dobbs said about \$6,000, and did receive a small payment from one of those who are delinquent. She said presently about \$50,000 is loaned out.

A question was raised about the interest rate for the loans, and Yost said it was set a 5 percent when the program started.

The program began about 10 years ago as a grant of \$100,000 through the Northwest Development and Planning District, and the county had \$90,000 to loan out with a maximum of \$15,000 per loan.

Carolyn Applegate, former economic development director, helped get the original loans completed to keep the grant money.

Today the fund operates off the payment and interest repaid into the fund to be loaned out again.

Dobbs said sending the monthly statements has helped keep more of the loans current.

Commissioner Linin made a

motion to approve the micro loan to Bowladium and was seconded by Thomas. The vote was 2-0 with Commissioner Cynthia Strnad absent.

A question was asked about the future micro loans, and it was decided since the money came through the county the county commissioners would be the final say.

Thomas said it was good to hear from the committee, and hopes the future recommendations provide a bit more information. He said the county does not want to let these go so long the business people think they do not have to pay the money back.

Selby said the committee should ask for more records when reviewing a loan request.

Dobbs said the committee does have the right to see an annual profit and loss statement if the business has been open for a period of time.

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