

WELCOME TO

Nebraska's  
Northwest



## NEBRASKA NORTHWEST DEVELOPMENT

### from the Director's Desk

**S**tarting a new year has always felt good to me. It signals new opportunities, a chance to start over (if you need that), and the most interesting time of the year for old political junkies. I can't help myself, I just love the legislative session. I wish I was closer to Lincoln and could visit the capitol more often. It is one of my favorite buildings architecturally and for what goes on there. I was fortunate to spend quite a bit of time there over the past couple decades, and love the chance to accompany folks there who have never visited before.



Last week, when I testified at a hearing, I got to show a colleague around. She's from another state and had

never been to the capitol before. She's probably lucky we didn't have more time or I might have drug her to all the nooks & crannies I've discovered over the years. The history of the building and the people is awe inspiring.

I found myself a little less than familiar though with all the new faces on the floor of the legislature. We need to take every opportunity we can find to introduce ourselves to all 49 Senators. It's one of the best ways to lessen the distance between Lincoln and Chadron, by becoming friends, or at least acquaintances with the folks who will be making decisions that affect us all. If they can put a face to a town mentioned, they will think a little longer before deciding whether a measure is truly 'good' for the whole state.

## DELTA Travels To Lincoln

There is nothing quite as refreshing to me as a trip to the state capitol with a group of young people, many of whom have never visited the seat of state government. Not only is the building stunning in its architectural design, but it is exciting to be among the law makers, lobbyists, state agency and elected officials.

Ten members of the Dawes County Entrepreneur and Leadership Training Academy (DELTA) class of 2011 had the opportunity to visit Lincoln the first week of February. They attended with the Leadership Scottsbluff class and were treated to several hours of the Governor and First Lady's time at the residence. The informal conversation and visit helped them realize the Governor is first and foremost a man who believes in the future of Nebraska. He has a dog (Snickers) and believe it or not, puts



DELTA Students pause in the Capitol Rotunda during their trip to Lincoln.

his pants on one leg at a time, just like the rest of us. Taking the mystery out of 'life as Nebraska's CEO' helps you realize the importance of your own input and participation.

The same holds true for the State Senators. Senators Loudon, Harms, Schilz, Carlson and Utter all visited with the students, recognized their attendance in the legislative gallery and had lunch with the group, just like any other normal person. I was impressed with

the depth of questions the participants had for the Governor and their Senators. In addition, they received briefings from Richard Baier, State Department of Economic Development Director and State Chamber of Commerce Executive, Barry Kennedy. The trip accomplished just what I think it should have. It provided another hands on example and learning opportunity for our future leaders.



# NNDC Advocates for Transportation Issues

The US Congress has made little progress in charting a new course for expiring transportation programs. Essential Air Service, a subsidized program that allows Chadron and several other Nebraska cities to maintain commercial air service has come under attack to be discontinued. We have contacted our Senators in support of this program. The surface transportation program has been operating on continuing resolutions for funding almost a year. It is unclear whether or not we will see a bill pass this fiscal year. And at the state level, dwindling gasoline taxes collected at the state level along with sky rocketing construction costs have all but halted any new highway construction.



NNDC has been actively participating in efforts to bring these issues to our elected officials' attention. February 10, NNDC's Executive Director testified before the Nebraska Legislature's Revenue Committee in support of LB84. This is a bill that takes a step toward the problem of funding new highway construction, as well as providing the state with the alternative of selling bonds to fund the construction. It also dedicates a new revenue stream to make the payments on those bonds.

Sen. Deb Fischer's bill and corresponding constitutional amendment would change how we fund highway construction and maintenance in Nebraska. This issue is critical statewide, and of particular note in Western Nebraska where we are trying to fund the 4-lane Heartland Expressway yet to be finished from Colorado to the South Dakota borders. We believe this expressway will bring business development, transportation business and even more visitors to our area. NNDC will continue to advocate on behalf of the businesses we represent for a safe, efficient, accessible transportation system that serves all of Nebraska.

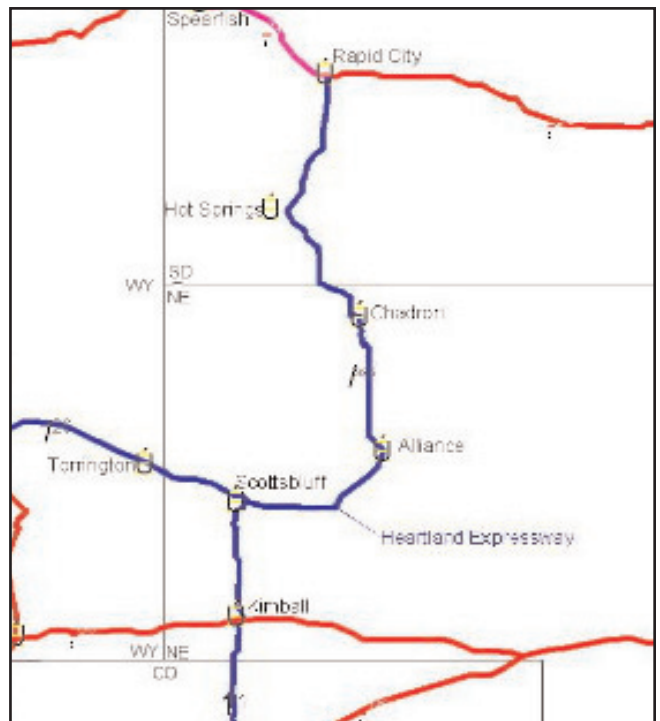


**Kristie Dexter, new NNDC President congratulates Past President Eric Fuller.**

## Board of Directors Reorganizes

NNDC held its Annual meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2011 and elected Rob Bila and Don Blausey to the Board. The following day we elected new officers with Kristie Dexter elected as President, Don Blausey as Vice President, Roy Fitzgibbon as Treasurer and Matt Reeves as Secretary.

Members of the Loan Review Committee are Roy Fitzgibbon, Chair, Rob Bila, Rob Wahlstrom, Lue Jensen and Lori Heibult. We have adopted an annual operating budget and a new multi-year strategic plan that can be viewed on our website. This will guide the organization with priorities, projects and direction for our programs. The Board of Directors meets monthly, the third Wednesday at 7 a.m. The meetings are open to the public any anyone is welcome to attend. We meet at the Country Kitchen.







# UNL Architect Students Unveil Projects

The semester-long class project undertaken by the UNL architect students last year resulted in 9 proposed projects, ranging from landscaping along highways 20 & 285 to elaborate ideas for housing, retail space, community buildings, industrial sites, conservation and environmental rehabilitation.

Chadron is fortunate to have been selected for the project and our hopes are that the ideas presented will spark interest, investment and 'ownership' of one or more of the projects. It's understandable that any proposed projects will need to be tweaked (or changed con-



siderably) due to the reality of community input and funding. But what a great thing to have so many proposals from which to choose!

As fun as this process has been, the next steps will be a little more difficult. Putting into action the ideas and projects will require commitment, investment and follow through.

Chadron can be the envy of many of our neighbors, but not without a little work. We hope you will 'heed the call' if asked to step up and help with one of these exciting projects.



## **NNDC Board of Directors 2010**

- Kristie Dexter .....President
- Don Blausey .....Vice President
- Roy Fitzgibbon .....Treasurer
- Matt Reeves .....Secretary
- Eric Fuller .....Past President
- Rick Koza..... Director
- Bryce Landen.....Director
- Jake Stewart .....Director
- Rob Bila .....Director
- Rob Wahlstrom .....Director
- Donny Grantham .....Director
- Rick Koza.....Director
- Ed Kuhnel .....Director

Sandy Powell .....Ex-Officio,  
City Manager

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