

Miltonvale KAN STEP project demonstrates volunteerism at its best



Volunteers at Miltonvale work at pouring 60 cu. yd. of 4,000 psi concrete for the driveway on April 23, 2009. The drive measures 30 feet by 100 feet.

The self-help, sweat equity program in Kansas – KAN STEP – is completing additional projects. As of May 1, 2009, a total of 50 projects have been completed. There are 17 projects in various stages of construction. The total projects include 10 water systems, 31 fire stations, 22 community buildings and four libraries or civic centers. Each project represents a major achievement for the community involved. The KAN STEP program is successful because of the volunteers who want to help their communities. When local people care enough, they make things happen; they put aside their personal agendas and schedules for the purpose of improving their community.

I have discussed the virtues of volunteerism in prior articles. No doubt today's KAN STEP volunteers likely learned volunteerism from their parents and grandparents. Volunteerism is virtuous. We should also not forget what makes it all possible. KAN STEP is only possible because of Congress' continual funding of the Community Development Block Grant program as administered through Kansas Department of Commerce. Combine those dollars with the local commitment that is demonstrated over and over by local volunteers, and KAN STEP shines as a stellar example of civic involvement.

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Communities are helped and people feel good about being involved. The word "stakeholders" has real meaning when hundreds or even thousands of hours are donated by individual community members.

Volunteerism is noble

Contrary to the agendas besieging air waves and the other advertising media, a goal in life does not need to involve space travel, having backyard swimming pools, glider planes, entertainment extravaganzas, fast cars or thrill pills. Human happiness thrives only in a certain kind of environment. Nothing in this life is going to be perfect, but it can be much more gratifying by giving of ourselves vs. trying to take everything for ourselves. Every time I leave a KAN STEP project I am humbled by the donations that the volunteers make to come together and get things done.

I would like to showcase the new project at Miltonvale in this article. It has been successful in a short amount of time. The Kansas Department of Commerce announced funding in the amount of \$293,440 to help the residents in and around the City of Miltonvale to construct a new emergency services building in August 2008. Local volunteers would contribute \$385,884; the total

retail cost was estimated at \$679,324.

Miltonvale is located in southeastern Cloud County, west of Clay Center. The population of the city is approximately 550 people. The new emergency services building will measure 64 feet wide and 100 feet long. The facility will include a training room with a kitchenette, restrooms, an office, two ambulance bays, and a six-bay fire department.

The site for the new Fire Station has been a project of transformation and reclamation. Until not long ago, the site was home to the former Begnoche Oil – a local service station which like many others in small towns across Kansas and the nation, was idle for years, eventually falling into a state of disrepair. Local businessman John Gisselbeck led a group who purchased the property. After the purchase was finalized, the group hired Dion Lyne Dozer Service to demolish the building and level the site. With the building removed, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s Bureau of Remediation brought in a contractor to clean up any ground contamination. Then, because the group of local businessmen did not want to own the building site, they deeded it to Twin Valley Telephone.

Local banker Daren Sanders approached John Gisselbeck and Mike Foster, President of Twin Valley Telephone which is based in Miltonvale, about the possible donation of the land to the city as a site for a new fire and EMS station. John and Mike attended a city council meeting to pledge their support for the project. The city accepted the property. The city of Miltonvale feels very fortunate to be home to Twin Valley Telephone.

Design of the facility took until January 2009; the first bids came in over estimate and so some modifications and a rebid were necessary. Construction began on February 24 with digging the main footings. The community’s goal was to have all concrete completed by crop planting season. The concrete driveway was the last pour of concrete to be completed. The last pour was on April 23 and soon after, many of the volunteers were in their fields planting corn. From February 24 to April 23, the footings, walls and floors with trench drains and 30-ft. x 100-ft. driveway were poured.

That kind of progress doesn't happen by sitting and talking about it or debating it in the coffee shop. It happens only through hard work and determination. Kudos to the volunteers at Miltonvale and all the other KAN STEP projects. More good times are ahead.

Shane Holthaus has been a KAN STEP Tech Assistant for KRWA since November 2002. He previously worked for 13 years for a professional contractor. He has been involved in 50 KAN STEP projects; he enjoys the challenges of the projects and is pleased to work with volunteers in communities across the state.



Proper placement of the plumbing is always critical. This photo shows plumbing for the restrooms before being back-filled. One toilet, one sink, one drain – and one shower. Simple and practical – as it should be.

KAN STEP projects

Fire Stations

Formoso
McFarland
Tescott
Russell Co. (Waldo)
Rawlins Co. (McDonald)
Saline County (Hedville)
Washington
Axtell
Downs
Belvue
Grinnell
Morrill
White City
Mitchell Co. (Asherville)
Enterprise
Glasco
Uniontown
Westmoreland
Winona
St. Francis
St. Paul
Highland
Dickinson Co. (Woodbine)
Altoona
Woodson Co. (Yates Center)
Reno Co. (Saint Joe)
Labette Co. (Dennis)
Miltonvale
Caney
Mitchell Co. (Scottsville)
West Mineral

Miscellaneous Buildings

Williamsburg
Lucas
Junction City
Rice Co. (Lyons)

Water Systems

Formoso
St. Paul
Chase County
Nemaha County
Enterprise
Corning
Agra
Emmett
Greenwood Co. RWD 1
Greenleaf

Community Buildings

Melvorn
Morris Co. (Delevan)
Goff
Burns
Whiting
Bern
Carbondale
Onaga
Lincolnville
Arcadia
Selden
Granola
Hartford
Bunker Hill
Tipton
Auburn
Bentley
Corning
Hunter
Hanover
Horton
Damar