

FarmAid funds go to rural communities

By Chris McCubbin
Staff Reporter

With all the recent controversy about where FarmAid III will be held, and when and why it should be held, it's easy to forget who the concert is for — financially troubled farm families.

Joanne Komenda of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, said Nebraska has received about \$140,000 in aid from the first two FarmAid concerts.

The Nebraska Pantry Network, which has received the bulk of Nebraska FarmAid funds, is part of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, an organization affiliated with the National Council of Churches.

Komenda said that Nebraska will receive the same share of funds raised whether or not the concert is held in Lincoln.

"We don't get an extra piece of the pie for hosting" the event, she said.

FarmAid doesn't have its own distribution networks, she said. Instead, they work through established organizations like the Nebraska Pantry Network. This means that only 2 percent of the funds go to administrative costs, she said.

In addition to Interchurch Ministries, which received \$110,000, other Nebraska organizations benefiting from FarmAid include:

●Nebraskans for Peace, which received \$10,000 for community meetings and literature on the relationship between military spending and the farm crisis.

●The Farm Crisis Committee in Emerson received \$10,000, which went to help farmers buy seed and is being used to send regular reports on farm issues to 12,000 committee members.

●The Farm Crisis Hotline, which is operated by Interchurch Ministries, received \$10,000. Komenda said the

\$110,000 for Interchurch Ministries was pre-designated for three different operations. She said the money is for direct needs only, and none of the funds go to administrative costs.

Sixty-thousand dollars went to food for farmers. The funds were distributed to local food pantries throughout the state serving farm communities, Komenda said.

Although farmers are notoriously proud when it comes to taking charity, Komenda said that they are much more open to help from FarmAid than to help from the government. Also, she said, most local food pantries are established by a community member, usually a farmer's wife, and this local connection makes it easier for farmers to accept help.

An additional \$40,000 was allocated for utility, medical and other emergency needs of farm families and individuals.

Applications for emergency grants

are submitted by community human services workers on behalf of the farmer or farm family. Grants are limited to one per family, up to the amount of \$200.

The final project began last Christmas with a \$2,500 check from Willie Nelson himself, earmarked for special holiday needs. This was followed by \$8,000 more from FarmAid. Komenda calls this project her favorite and "the highlight of everybody's Christmas here in the office."

Komenda said that money was in the mailboxes of needy farm families by Christmas Eve, allowing gifts to be bought for many children who would have gone without.

Komenda said that the northeast portion of the state receives the most aid, with the Panhandle second and the southeastern portion third.

Komenda said that the more remote the farm, the more likely aid is needed. Most requests come from rural addresses and towns with populations of less than 300, she said.

Komenda said that she expects the

distribution to remain substantially the same after the third FarmAid concert.

"I think they (FarmAid) are pretty satisfied" with national distribution, she said, adding "I don't want any changes."

However, she said, Nebraska might get a slightly smaller share this time because, while FarmAid outreach began with a core of midwest states, recent events like the drought in the southeast have caused FarmAid to extend its help to a greater portion of the nation.

Editor's Note

Health and fitness are issues many college students are concerned about.

A health topic of vital importance to most students is sexually transmitted diseases. We have included a story giving information on the most common of these diseases and their symptoms. It also provides information on treatment that can be obtained at the University Health Center.

On the fitness side we have included a complete listing of health clubs in Lincoln, as well as the Better Business Bureau's tips for joining health clubs.

Due to space limitations we excluded information about diet and nutrition. We suggest if you are interested to contact the University Health Center or the health clubs listed to get more information on this subject.

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