Program helps rural areas advance, plan business goals

By LORI ROBISON Staff Reporter

ideas can fall flat without proper plan-

is exactly what the Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneur pro- gional emphasis, Kahl said. The emgram is all about.

UNL's Center for Rural Commuwill put the 1996-97 EDGE program ing the class. to work in 12 rural Nebraska communities across the state.

tor at UNL, said the program focuses Entrepreneurial Network, has been on creating comprehensive business designed specifically for the Midwest plans based on individual situations and is currently being used in 13 states.

ness plans, Schlake said, include fea- munity can tailor the program to meet sible goals, a sound management team, its specific needs, including inviting marketing knowledge and familiarity guest speakers and hiring business with the clientele. If necessary, these owners for some instruction. elements may need to be neatly packaged for presentation to a bank or other \$10,000 per community. This funding loan establishment.

individual business goals.

Nebraska Fast Trac Program, EDGE Development, and the U.S. West Founhas met with increasingly positive com- dation. Student fees are approximately munity responses each year, Schlake \$200 each, depending on how many said. The starting date of the classes is sponsors a community recruits. in January, but some communities, such as Broken Bow, are already approach- matches of 150 percent, she said. ing the class size limit of 18 business

Dennis Kahl, extension educator for the Seward County EDGE Coalition, said the program, now in its second year in the Seward area, owes much of its success to the curriculum's emphasis on real-life issues and individual situations.

"Instead of putting dollars into something that won't work," he said, about a program in their specific area "students have a really viable chance can do so by calling the UNL Institute to explore other alternatives."

For instance, a few business teams at 472-3030.

attending the class discovered after only a few weeks that their plans and ideas were not feasible, Kahl said. The concepts learned in this program saved Even the greatest entrepreneurial these people money and time — and maybe even their businesses, he said.

A town's entire business commu-And planning for business success nity can benefit from EDGE, largely phasis allows for networking and establishing contacts among local businity Revitalization and Development ness owners and entrepreneurs attend-

In addition, EDGE's core curriculum-NX (pronounced "next") Level Marilyn Schlake, EDGE coordina- Program — developed by Western

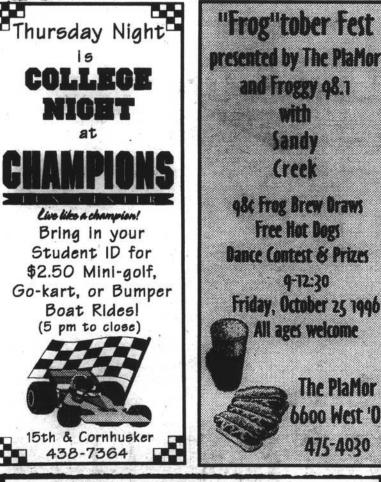
But the entire curriculum is not A few features of successful busi- etched in stone, Kahl said. Each com-

The total cost of the course is about covers training, instructors, texts and "This is really a different kind of other needed materials. Each commuprogram," Schlake said. "(Students) nity is responsible for recruiting sponcan look at the research for their own sors and raising \$5,000 which is then businesses and develop a plan for their matched on the state level through grants from the Department of Eco-First established in 1992 as the nomic Development, USDA Rural

Last year's recruitment generated

After successfully sponsoring a program, each community selects a representative to serve on the state coalition, Schlake said. This committee decides on a yearly basis which communities will receive grant money and what adaptations, if any, should be made in the program.

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