

Program helps rural areas advance, plan business goals

By LORI ROBISON
Staff Reporter

Even the greatest entrepreneurial ideas can fall flat without proper planning.

And planning for business success is exactly what the Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneur program is all about.

UNL's Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development will put the 1996-97 EDGE program to work in 12 rural Nebraska communities across the state.

Marilyn Schlake, EDGE coordinator at UNL, said the program focuses on creating comprehensive business plans based on individual situations and goals.

A few features of successful business plans, Schlake said, include feasible goals, a sound management team, marketing knowledge and familiarity with the clientele. If necessary, these elements may need to be neatly packaged for presentation to a bank or other loan establishment.

"This is really a different kind of program," Schlake said. "(Students) can look at the research for their own businesses and develop a plan for their individual business goals."

First established in 1992 as the Nebraska Fast Trac Program, EDGE has met with increasingly positive community responses each year, Schlake said. The starting date of the classes is in January, but some communities, such as Broken Bow, are already approaching the class size limit of 18 business teams.

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, "students have a really viable chance to explore other alternatives."

For instance, a few business teams

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 these people money and time — and maybe even their businesses, he said.

A town's entire business community can benefit from EDGE, largely because of the program's local and regional emphasis, Kahl said. The emphasis allows for networking and establishing contacts among local business owners and entrepreneurs attending the class.

In addition, EDGE's core curriculum—NX (pronounced "next") Level Program—developed by Western Entrepreneurial Network, has been designed specifically for the Midwest and is currently being used in 13 states.

But the entire curriculum is not etched in stone, Kahl said. Each community can tailor the program to meet its specific needs, including inviting guest speakers and hiring business owners for some instruction.

The total cost of the course is about \$10,000 per community. This funding covers training, instructors, texts and other needed materials. Each community is responsible for recruiting sponsors and raising \$5,000 which is then matched on the state level through grants from the Department of Economic Development, USDA Rural Development, and the U.S. West Foundation. Student fees are approximately \$200 each, depending on how many sponsors a community recruits.

Last year's recruitment generated matches of 150 percent, she said.

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.

People interested in learning more about a program in their specific area can do so by calling the UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at 472-3030.

OPRYLAND AUDITIONS

Serious performers get their start at Opryland Productions, Inc. Our alumni include Lorrie Morgan, Little Texas, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and many more. For 1997 we're hiring over 500 singers, dancers, actors, specialty acts, musicians and technical personnel to join our casts at Opryland Themepark in Nashville and elsewhere.

If you're passionate and talented, get focused and call us.

1996 Audition Date

Lincoln, Nebraska
October 29 1:00-4:00 p.m.
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska
Union (14th & R Sts.)

1-800-947-8243



Thursday Night
is
COLLEGE NIGHT
at
CHAMPIONS

Live like a champion!
Bring in your Student ID for \$2.50 Mini-golf, Go-kart, or Bumper Boat Rides! (5 pm to close)

15th & Cornhusker
438-7364

"Frog"tober Fest
presented by The PlaMor and Froggy q&f
with Sandy Creek

q&f Frog Brew Draws Free Hot Dogs
Dance Contest & Prizes
9-12:30
Friday, October 25 1996
All ages welcome

The PlaMor
6600 West 'D'
475-4030

Live at Huey's
directly following the game

Huey's 13th & Q • Lower Level Gunny's Building
2 Blocks from the stadium

Today - mad, mad prices on new fall clothing! See you there!

HAROLD'S MIDNIGHT MADNESS!

Yes, the whole store's gone mad!
We've reduced prices on new, yes new, fall clothing! And if that's not enough... there'll be cheap refreshments (**they're free!!**) and loud, terrible music (**you'll love it!!**) All this... plus a few bizarre and insane surprises too crazy to mention!!

TODAY, OCT. 24TH!
***10AM TO MIDNIGHT**

*Store closed from 5-7pm to restock merchandise throughout the store.

HAROLD'S

EXCLUSIVELY AT ONE PACIFIC PLACE, OMAHA