

Falls City selected for Communities For Kids initiative

(KLZA)-- Falls City was recently selected to be part of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Communities for Kids, a state-wide initiative supporting young children, families and those providing care.

Falls City Public School Superintendent Tim Heckenlively reported during the May Board meeting about the need to expand the early childhood programs. An additional classroom has been established at North School with more children attending, the collaboration with SENCA Head Start has been strengthened and the SIXPENCE program continues to expand. Currently there is a shortage of facility space.

The Communities for Kids initiative is a multi-year planning and implementation initiative created in response to community requests for assistance with high-quality early childhood care and education programs.

Private funds are part of the program coming initially from some Omaha foundations meant to support communities in need of expanding early childhood programming and education.

Falls City submitted a successful application for funding and will be receiving funds for various planning purposes for programming and expansion.

Two grants have been received in Falls City. The first was from Communities for Kids in an amount of \$30 thousand to used over a three year period for planning purposes. Communities for Kids was also able to access some of the federal ARPA funds and Falls City will receive \$140 thousand of those funds to be utilized over a two-year period.

Superintendent Heckenlively says the program will require local support for the program to be successful. Some initial community focus groups have been started. Sometime in the next month, community stakeholders will be invited in to a meeting where Communities for Kids will come in and facilitate a meeting for community envisioning.

Capacity shortages impact children's development and pose a challenge for communities hoping to attract and retain the viable workforce they need to thrive.

The Communities for Kids program helps facilitate conversations among a community's public and private organizations, and also provides expertise, tools and resources to the community to support the creation and implementation of solutions to advance early childhood programming.

Many Signals Communications