



# Renville

## COUNTY MESSENGER

CONNECTING YOU WITH YOUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Volume 14

Summer 2015

Issue 2

## ACTS of Kindness Adult Day Center

Acts of Kindness Adult Day Center located in Olivia serves adults who need extra care. The center opened its doors in December 2013 under the direction of Karen Borden, Director for the Adult Client Training Service. The organization's mission statement is: "Acts of Kindness is committed to helping older adults remain in the community, connected to family and friends. We are further dedicated to providing support and respite care for caregivers." Adult day services are provided for clients by Tammy Enstad, Adult Day Services Coordinator and Kellie Ramgren, Adult Day Services Assistant. Tammy and Kellie are very dedicated to the care of their clients. They both have previous experience working in group homes and nursing homes with adults. Tammy explained, "Acts of Kindness is designed to take care of adults in a day setting and to give caregivers and family members a break so they can give good care to their loved ones."

Currently 6 full time clients are being served, however, the center is approved to have up to 15 clients at one time. The center is licensed with the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services under Rule 223 and can provide adults with an individualized and coordinated set of services including health services, social services, and nutritional services that are focused on maintaining or improving participants' lives. The services provided at the center include nursing supervision, medication administration, assisting with personal care – (toileting, walking, nail and hair care), social activities, a noon meal and snacks, diet and health monitoring and exercise. Participants' health is



(L-R), Kellie Ramgren, Adult Day Services Assistant and Tammy Enstad, Adult Day Services Coordinator

monitored monthly with blood pressure checks, and weigh-ins. A monthly assessment is prepared and progress reports are shared with the clients' doctors.

Enstad and Ramgren have a creative flair to engage the clients in social activities. Some of the activities held at the center have included painting pictures, daycare children decorating Halloween cookies with the clients, having the local valentine's singers perform, and celebrating clients' birthdays. The clients also go on outings such as adventures to the local parks, playing bingo at other facilities, and even a

"Let's Go Fishing" trip to a local lake.

Participants are served Monday through Friday (except holidays) from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. A typical day begins with clients having coffee and a snack and a review of the day's current events. Next the clients and staff engage in

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

social activities such as playing cards or board games, and a half hour of exercise. The group then has lunch catered by a local restaurant followed by a rest period. After a rest the participants engage in outings, work on art and craft projects or play games. Time is spent reviewing the events of the day and then the group has a second snack and gets ready to go home. Central Community Transit provides bus rides to and from home for the participants with the fare included in the daily program fee.

*The daily program fees for participants are provided by several different sources including: an Alternate Care Long Term Care Insurance, Veteran's Administration, Private Pay, Elderly Waiver, and Community Alternatives for Disabled Individuals.*

If you would like to help, the Acts of Kindness' staff can use your assistance in a couple of ways. They hunt garage sales for items that can be used for craft projects, board games and even movies. If you have any these items that you would like to donate to the center you can drop them off or contact the center's staff. The other way that you can help the staff and clients is to become a volunteer and share your time and talents with them.

*If you would like to help, you may contact Acts of Kindness staff by phone at 320-523-5666.*

## Linda Goblirsch RETIRED FROM COUNTY LICENSE BUREAU

After working for Renville County for nearly 42 years, Linda Goblirsch retired in June. Linda grew up and attended school in Olivia and began her working career in 1973 as an office assistant for Pillsbury located in downtown Minneapolis. A few months later she decided to get married and moved back to Renville County. In 1973, she began her county employment in the Auditor's department working with tax collection, voter registration, vehicle tab renewal and transfers. She also worked with the Comprehensive Employee Training Act (CETA), a federal program designed to assist people seeking employment in counties, cities, and schools.

In 1976, the license function was separated from the Auditor's department and became the License Bureau. It was physically located in the southeast corner of the lower level of the courthouse along with Planning and Zoning, the Ag Inspector, Civil Defense, and the Assistant County Administrator. The space was vacated by the Human Services department as it was moved to the original part of the county hospital. Up until 1978 the Court Administrator's department processed driver's licenses and identification cards and then these functions were transferred to the county's License Bureau. In addition to the licensing duties, the staff did work as needed for the Auditor and the Assistant County Administrator.

In 1983, Linda was appointed to be the Deputy Register of the License Bureau. Another move for the department happened in 1987 when it was

relocated to the southwest corner of the lower level of the courthouse and was dedicated to license department duties. At this point staff took applicants pictures for driver's licenses with a camera. The film was mailed to the state once per week. The driver's license applications were numbered and the pictures had a matching number. After applying or renewing a driver's license it took about 6 weeks to receive the license in the mail. Receipts were handwritten and daily reports were mailed to the State Department of Public Safety (DPS). In 2003 the License Bureau moved again to its current location on the second floor of the courthouse.

The department has seen many technology changes. The first computer used for the bureau's reporting arrived in 1982. An independent software programmer created a software program for county license departments that was purchased by Renville County. The license software program ran on MS DOS. Linda attended classes to learn how to work with MS DOS. Linda said, "Adapting to technology made the job more challenging. We didn't have technology staff at the time to assist us, so we set up the computer and loaded updates when the programmer made changes. Eventually DPS took over the software eliminating the private programmers and the license departments across the state all used the same software. It was a step in the right direction with the technology available at the time." The staff worked with a dot matrix printer and dialup internet that was slower and more cumbersome to



Linda Goblirsch retired after nearly 42 years with Renville County.

work with. Linda reflected, "The technology is much more advanced, although we still print and mail reports to DPS. New and renewed Driver's License and Identification Card photos are sent electronically nightly to the state. The applications for the licenses and cards are mailed and sent electronically to DPS."

Fun Fact from Linda: in 1971 the filing fee that the county retained for a motor vehicle transaction was 75 cents, now it is \$6.00 or \$10.00 depending on the type of transaction. When asked about her future retirement plans Linda replied, "I will be eliminating one of my full time jobs. I will be working full time with my husband at our local business. And I hope to spend more time with our grandkids."

With Linda's retirement, the License Bureau will now be under the direction of Marc Iverson, the Auditor/Treasurer. Deb Folkerts, long time License Bureau employee, is the License Supervisor/Assistant Deputy Registrar.

# DO YOU NEED HELP PAYING FOR CHILD CARE?



The Renville County Human Service Agency has Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance funds available for working parents or parents attending school/college.

If you are a Renville County resident and have income that is at or below 47% of the State Median Income, we can assist you in paying for a portion of your monthly child care expenses.

Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) Child Care Assistance may help you pay child care costs if you do not receive MFIP and your income is within program limits.

## BSF CAN HELP YOU WITH CHILD CARE COSTS FOR ANY COMBINATION OF:

- **WORK:** You may get help with child care costs if you are working at least an average of 20 hours per week and earn at least minimum wage. If you are a full time student you may get help with child care for employment, if you work an average of 10 hours per week and earn minimum wage.
- **SCHOOL OR TRAINING:** You may be able to get child care assistance for the amount of time your school says it takes to complete your degree. Your child care worker will help you develop an education plan that includes school or training to prepare for work.
- **JOB SEARCH:** You may get help with child care costs for a limited time to look for work.

*Please contact Nancy S., Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance Worker at 320-523-3528 if your income is below the following 47% Entrance Level:*

*Family of two - \$28,708 / Family of three - \$35,462 / Family of four - \$42,217  
Family of five - \$48,972 / Family of six - \$55,727*



**AUGUST 19th - 21st**

Come visit the Renville County Booths at the County Fair, and learn about what your county government is doing for you.

## COUNTY PHONE NUMBERS

Administrator	320-523-3710	Central Community Transit	800-450-7964	Sheriff	320-523-1161
Assessor	320-523-3645	Heartland Community or	320-523-1842	Veterans Service	320-523-3763
Attorney	320-523-2661	Action Agency Inc.	877-523-1842	Water Planning & HHW	320-523-3706
Auditor/Treasurer	320-523-2071	Renville Co. Hospital	320-523-1261	<i>County Commissioners:</i>	
Court Services/Probation	320-523-3663	HRA/EDA	320-523-3656	Randy Kramer, District #1	320-365-3094
Court Administration	320-523-3680	Human Services	320-523-2202	Bob Fox, District #2	507-557-8265
Environment & Community		Landfill/Solid Waste	320-523-1505	Paul Setzepfandt, District #3	320-365-3270
Development	320-523-3768	License Bureau	320-523-3612	John Stahl, District #4	320-523-1283
Extension	320-523-3713	Public Health Nursing	320-523-2570	LaMont Jacobson, District #5	320-765-2578
Hawk Creek Watershed	320-523-3666	Public Works	320-523-3759		
Central Community Transit	320-523-3589	Recorder/Abstractor	320-523-3669		



Kandiyohi-Renville  
Community Health Board  
**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

# Top Ten Health Issues

Kandiyohi-Renville Public Health recently completed a process for identifying our top ten health issues. The Public Health Advisory Committee and staff along with community members and organizations were involved in this process. For more information, check the local health data section under Public Health at <http://www.co.renville.mn.us/> *We featured the Top Five Health Issues in the April issue and now have the last five of the Top Ten Health Issues in this issue.*

## MOTOR VEHICLE INJURY

Over the period from 2007-2013, there was a statistically significant disparity between Kandiyohi and Renville Counties concerning traffic fatalities per capita. Kandiyohi ranks in the top best 15 of Minnesota counties, whereas Renville County ranked 84th out of 87 counties. Renville County has an abnormally high traffic fatality per capita rate. Distracted driving is a recognized emerging issue.

## OBESITY / OVERWEIGHT

Obesity and overweight rates of adults and children have increased. Obesity leads to long-term health complications (heart disease, diabetes, depression,

arthritis, some cancers, etc.) Nearly 60% of pregnant WIC participants in both counties are overweight or obese, along with 32% of WIC children age 2-5. Preventing obesity in children helps adolescents maintain a healthy weight into adulthood.

## POOR NUTRITION

Poor nutrition affects our residents. Diets lacking adequate nutrients can lead to diseases, illnesses, and health problems. A large proportion of food consumed is high in added sugars, sodium, and fats and is not prepared from scratch. Food shelf usage has increased in recent years. About 43% of food shelf patrons have children and 60% are from households with at least one working adult. Minnesota Kids Count data shows that 49% of children in Kandiyohi and 47.5% of children in Renville received free or reduced lunch at school. Barriers to food access exist throughout our counties.

## POVERTY

Income is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of health and disease. Research finds that people with higher incomes generally enjoy better health and live longer than people with lower incomes. People in poverty face conditions that lead to poor health including unsafe housing, lack of access to nutritious foods, less leisure time for physical activity, poorer education and more overall stress.

## VIOLENCE

As a health issue, violence affects all aspects of life. Physical and mental health are nurtured and allowed to flourish in families and communities that are violence free. Acts of violence include child maltreatment, domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and youth violence. While overall crime rates remain fairly constant in the counties, the impact of interpersonal violence extends its reach across multiple generations of families, communities, and systems. Bullying was also cited as a growing concern.



**Renville  
County**

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Web site: [www.co.renville.mn.us](http://www.co.renville.mn.us)

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# HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS

105 South 5th Street, Suite 318 • Olivia, MN 56277 • (320) 523-3812 • [www.renville.com](http://www.renville.com)

Summer 2015

Issue 2

Volume 14

## *Chris Hettig* RETIRED IN MAY



*Chris Hettig serves cake at her retirement party.*

*Chris Hettig retired from the Renville County Housing Redevelopment Authority and Economic Development Authority (HRA/EDA) at the end of May.* She will be missed by county and city staff along with a long list of clients and businesses she has worked with over her 30 year career in the field. Chris has served for the past 14 years as the Executive Director of the HRA/EDA.

Previous to employment with Renville County, Chris served as the Director for many organizations including; Olivia EDA, Alexandria Economic Development Commission (EDC), Stevens County EDC, West Central Initiative Fund, Olivia Area Chamber of Commerce, and Greater Olivia Development Corporation. Chris was the 1999 recipient of the Economic Developer of the Year Award from the Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM). Chris was the first women president of the Alexandria Rotary Club and also a Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP) graduate. While certified as both Housing Development Finance Specialist and Economic Development Finance Specialist, she committed to focus on sustainable development projects and was actively involved in the promotion of agriculture, tourism and natural history. Chris contributed to several initiatives including MN Star City Advisory,

University of Minnesota Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs' recommendations to the Clinton Administration, Rotary International, and served on the Board of Trustees of the Community Reinvestment Fund. Chris also served on the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Board, Buy Fresh Buy Local Steering Committee for West Central Minnesota as well as many other committees both personally and professionally.

*Chris's kind and welcoming nature along with her optimistic attitude will be missed by all in the County. In her retirement, Chris plans to continue to pursue her passions as a nature enthusiast with a passion for bird watching and gardening.*

*Susie Lang who worked for Chris as the HRA/EDA's Development Assistant will now head up the department as the Economic Development Coordinator. The office has been relocated and your can reach her at:*

**HRA/EDA Office:** 105 South 5th Street, Suite 318 • Olivia, MN 56277 • **Website:** [www.renville.com](http://www.renville.com)

**Direct Phone:** 320-523-3837 • **Fax:** 320-523-3812 • **Email:** [susiel@renvillecountymn.com](mailto:susiel@renvillecountymn.com) or [hra\\_ed@renvillecountymn.com](mailto:hra_ed@renvillecountymn.com)



## Would you like to make a difference in Renville County?

Be a part of the future of healthcare in Renville County by making a donation to the RC Hospital & Clinics Capital Campaign today.

Donations can be designated for:

Therapy Equipment • Women's Health • MRI • Patio Furniture

~~~~ All donations will be recognized. ~~~~

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Campaign Chair **Dr. Kathryn K. Kelly** at [capitalcampaign@rchospital.com](mailto:capitalcampaign@rchospital.com) or by **PHONE 320.333.6002**.

We look forward to seeing you at the new RC Hospital & Clinics Ribbon Cutting on **Monday, September 21st, 2015 at 100 Healthy Way**.

### HRA/EDA STAFF MEMBERS

Susie Lang, HRA/EDA Development Coordinator  
 Carrie Tersteeg, Administrative Assistant  
 Ron Louisiana, Maintenance  
 Housing Contacts: Amanda Hillmer, Pat Dingels

### HRA/EDA BOARD

Joel Harmoning, Chair, District 2  
 Deb Lingl, Vice-Chair, District 3  
 Mark Thiesse, Secretary-Treasurer, District 4  
 Sandy Housman, District 1  
 Janette Wertish, District 5  
 Blair Anderson, Board at-Large  
 Wendy Schwint, Board At-Large  
 Randy Kramer, Ex Officio

## Renville County FARMERS' MARKETS

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Buffalo Lake Area Farm &amp; Flea Market</b><br/>                 Saturdays 8:00am-12:00pm<br/>                 June 6th through the fall<br/>                 Buffalo Lake City Park Hwy 212<br/>                 For more info: Doug 320-389-1006</p>                                  | <p><b>Olivia Farmer's Market</b><br/>                 Thursdays 1:30-5:30pm<br/>                 July 9th through October<br/>                 City Parking Lot, 9th Street &amp; Fairview<br/>                 (2 blocks south of the stoplight, South of F &amp; M Bank)<br/>                 For more info: Cathy 320-522-1043</p> |
| <p><b>Fairfax Farmer's Market</b><br/>                 Tuesdays 4-6pm Mid July - September<br/>                 1st Street S.E. off Hwy 19 Fairfax<br/>                 For more info: Sara 507-426-7222</p>                                                                                   | <p><b>Morton Farmer's Market</b><br/>                 Fridays 9am-3pm<br/>                 Mid June through the fall<br/>                 City Hall Parking Lot (Downtown Morton on HWY 19)<br/>                 For more info: Shirley 507-697-6912</p>                                                                              |
| <p><b>Hector Farmer's Market</b><br/>                 Wednesdays 3-6pm<br/>                 July through the fall<br/>                 Highway 212 &amp; Co RD 4<br/>                 (South Central Grain &amp; Energy C- Store)<br/>                 For more info: LaVonne 320-848-2195</p> | <p>****An assortment of items available includes a variety of Minnesota Grown garden fresh produce from the rich black soil of Renville County. A large assortment of fresh breads, baked goods, canned &amp; pickled items, homemade mittens, crafts, jams, jellies, flowers and lots of vegetables.</p>                             |

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The Business Revolving Loan Fund is a unique and flexible source of supplemental financing for businesses that have a positive economic impact on Renville County.

**INTEREST RATES AS LOW AS 2 %!**

- Building & Plant Renovations
- Energy Efficiency Upgrades
- Permanently Retaining Existing Jobs
- Creating New Permanent Jobs
- Working Capital Loans
- Start-up

For more info contact, **Susie Lang**,  
 Renville County HRA/EDA.

**Phone: (320) 523-3837 or E-Mail:**  
**susiel@renvillecountymn.com**

Funds made available by the Renville County Housing & Economic Development Authority, The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act, & a grant from the USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) Program.

## Would Your house like a little TLC?



Do you need a new furnace, or maybe some insulation or windows? Those are just some of the eligible improvements under the Renville County Homeownership Program. Homeowners in Renville County may qualify for a no-interest loan

### Maximum incomes

- 1 person \$41,450
- 2 people \$47,350
- 3 people \$53,300
- 4 people \$59,200
- 5 people \$63,950
- 6 people \$68,650
- 7 people \$73,400
- 8 people \$78,150

of up to \$5,000 for half the cost of their home improvement project. Downpayment assistance also available to first time homebuyers. For more information call Susie or email: [susiel@renvillecountymn.com](mailto:susiel@renvillecountymn.com) Renville County HRA/EDA at 320-523-3837.



# Have you been financially affected by the Avian Influenza?

Many Renville County families are experiencing financial difficulty as a direct result of the Avian Influenza, and may be suffering emotionally because of it.

The **Renville County Board in partnership with local mental health providers are making resources available at no cost to help with those emotional issues.** This new service offers support for many issues including:

- Loss and grief after a job loss
- Depression and anxiety
- Emotional Distress
- Relationship issues
- Alcohol or chemical abuse problems
- Financial concerns

## **Program Counseling is:**

- **Convenient** – You have easy and timely access to a qualified counselor by contacting Woodland Centers (Olivia/Willmar) at **1-800-992-1716** or Discher and Associates (Renville) at **320-329-4357**
- **Confidential** – *Your personal information will not be shared with anyone. Only you will know you have called for assistance.*
- **No-Cost** – You and your dependents are eligible for **up to four counseling sessions at no-cost, and no insurance billings.**

## **Who can use the program?**

***Any Renville County resident and their dependent family members at any time you are feeling negatively affected by financial losses associated with the Avian Influenza.***

When calling or contacting one of the two provider choices listed above simply ***identify yourself as being negatively affected by the Avian Influenza outbreak in Renville County!***



# Is Avian Influenza causing you **STRESS** and **WORRY**?

*Avian Influenza has hit some Renville County barns. This affects not only the producer, but many people and businesses that are associated with turkey or chicken production. Layoffs, whether temporary or permanent, have been making news across Minnesota recently. Many families are preparing to experience potentially difficult financial and emotional situations. Listed below are resources that you may find helpful.*

There are a wide variety of thoughts and feelings that can occur when unexpected things happen. Anyone who sees or experiences this can be affected in some way.

## ➤ **SIGNS OF STRESS AND WORRY CAN INCLUDE**

- eating or sleeping too much or too little
- lack of energy, always feeling tired
- having unexplained aches or pains
- pulling away from people and things
- feeling helpless or hopeless
- smoking, drinking or using drugs more than you should
- feeling on edge, angry or upset, yelling or fighting with family and friends
- unable to perform daily tasks
- thinking of hurting or killing yourself or someone else

## ➤ **TIPS FOR COPING WITH STRESS AND WORRY**

- talk to another person (family, friends, chaplain/minister/pastor) for support - human beings, in general, recover more quickly from difficulties if they talk about them
- use relaxation methods (breathing exercises, meditation, calming self-talk, soothing music)
- engage in positive distracting activities (sports, hobbies, reading)
- spend time with others
- get adequate rest and eat healthy meals
- get some exercise when you can - even a walk around the block can make a difference
- maintain a normal schedule
- participate in a support group

*If you or someone you care about is experiencing any of these signs and finds it hard to get things done, get through the day or things are getting worse, please call for help.*

*If you need help with food, medical bills, financial assistance, or information on other community resources, call Renville County Human Services at 320-523-2202 or stop in the Olivia office at 105 South 5th Street, Olivia.*





# Renville 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ~ 2016

CONNECTING YOU WITH YOUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT



*The early settlers built their homes known as dugouts on the prairie.*

***Beginning in 1866, Renville County began to be permanently settled by immigrants primarily from Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, as well as many people born in the United States.*** A large number of people moved to Renville County from Wisconsin. The settlers were a strong group of people enduring many hardships. There were floods, grasshopper infestations, blizzards, and prairie fires to live through. The first settlers built homes along the Minnesota River and its tributary creeks in the southern part of the county. Eventually, people started to settle north of the river. They built their homes known as dugouts on the prairie. The houses were dug partly in the earth and built up with logs, with hay roofs, and usually a door and a window or two in the front. The prairie was made up of grasses with very few trees. The settlers had to bust up the sod grass to plant crops to make a living as farmers. The settlers heated their homes with wood and since trees were scarce on the prairie they had to travel to the Minnesota River bottom to harvest trees to keep warm during the winter months.

It was reported that floods caused a lot of damage for the early settlers in the Minnesota River valley. The valley land is made up of rich soil that was and still is of high-quality for growing corn and hay, good for grazing livestock and a great source of timber. The worst flood was in the spring of 1873. The river bottoms were under water up the sides of the bluffs on both sides

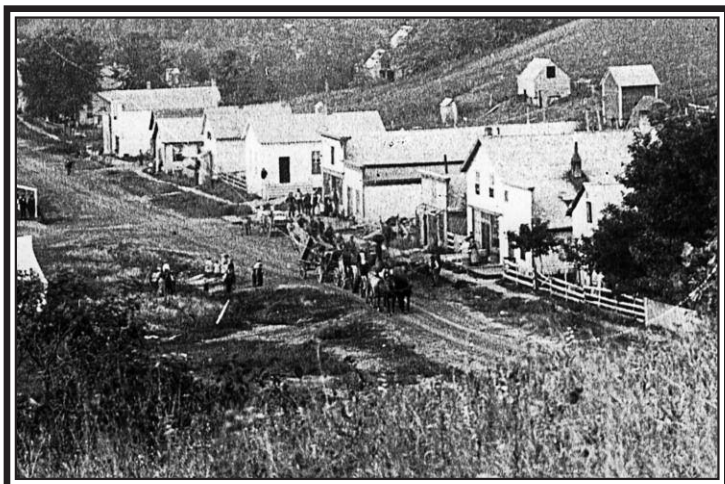
and in several places the water was fourteen feet up on the trunks of the trees, leaving a mark in the bark visible for many years.

Some of the most devastating grasshopper years occurred in the early to mid 1870's. There had been more settlement of the prairies, trees were starting to grow, more land was broken for the first time, and more crops were planted. But that all changed with the invasion of grasshoppers. One morning in July of 1874, the grasshoppers began to swarm in a blizzard-like cloud that darkened the skies. By late afternoon they had descended on the plains and ate most of the growing plants. A week later they left, after having laid their eggs. It was hoped that the cold winter weather would kill the eggs. By the following spring the settlers were hoping for a better year, but in May the insects began to hatch and in three days most of the living green plants were destroyed. It was said that the grasshoppers even ate the fence posts. The third year the insects repeated the story, but finally in the fourth year the grasshoppers disappeared almost overnight.

In the spring of most years, the early farmers had to contend with weather events that made the roads extremely muddy and fields wet. Often the wet conditions were due to heavy snow that fell during the winter months. The heavy snowfalls would often occur during a blizzard when the wind would blow the snow around on the open prairie and the air temperature would drop below zero. There wasn't a weather service to warn the pioneers about impending storms. A fall day could start out sunny and warm and



*Early settlers battling prairie fires.*



*Early view of the village of Beaver Falls.  
(Photo courtesy of Renville County Historical Society)*

then turn into a blizzard before evening. These sorts of storms could catch the pioneers in tragic situations. One such storm described by one of the settlers occurred in 1879 and was described as a very peculiar storm. "That year we managed to get in a good wheat crop from the land we seeded. But as we were doing our fall work, we were interrupted on October 15 and 16 by one of the most violent snow storms the county had ever experienced. During the evening it started to rain, but turned into a snow blizzard of the worst kind. More than 24 inches of snow fell. The next morning the temperature was about 30 degrees below zero and the wind was blowing some seventy miles an hour. No one was prepared for such a storm. Cattle froze to death and some herds ran away and completely disappeared. All of the crops were covered with deep snow. The wheat could not be threshed until the next summer, and then it was of a poor quality. A little of the snow melted, but the winter came on and there was twenty feet of snow in some places on the ground until the next spring. The new settlers were not prepared, thinking that they had several more weeks to plan for winter, and the sudden and early storm left many in a most desperate condition."

Prairie fires were just one more danger that the early settlers had to endure. The prairies were covered with grasses. When it was a dry year with little rain the conditions were just right for prairie fires to burn up the crops and even the settlers' homes and outbuildings. The settlers learned to make a broad strip of bare ground around their homes and outbuildings. These paths of grassless earth formed a ring of protection around their buildings. Another technique used by the settlers was to divert the prairie fires by building back fires. The back fires often changed the course of the fire and the farmers' crops were saved. It was a method of fighting fire with fire.

Many of the early settlers were poor. They had little capital to start their new venture and depended on their own hard work and good will. The families usually started out with a wagon, a pair of oxen, and one or two cows. Whenever a family needed help the neighbors responded with a helping hand. That was the way the new county was settled.

As the settlers moved into Renville County, little villages sprung up to address their needs. The little villages usually had a general store and each of the families who lived in the area had a cubby hole at the store to receive mail. The mail was delivered by stagecoach to the general store. The general stores sold produce, dry goods, house wares, and hardware. Farmers often traded the produce they raised for items at the store. In addition to the general store many of the villages had a creamery. The creameries sprung up as a direct result of the dairy farmers' success resulting in a surplus of milk. The extra milk was sold and also used to make butter and cheese and sold to the local residents. The old villages were spread throughout Renville County and included Beaver Falls in Beaver Falls Township, Bechyn in Henryville Township, Birch Cooley in Birch Cooley Township, Brookfield in Brookfield Township, Camp in Camp Township, Churchill in Brookfield Township, Cream City in Osceola Township, Eddsville in Palmyra Township, Finn Town southeast of Franklin, Florita in Flora Township, Husky Town in Bandon Township, Lakeside in Boon Lake Township, and Vicksburg in Flora Township. The little villages served the settlers with many of their needs, but as the railroads were built and rural mail delivery began to deliver mail right to peoples' homes, bigger towns were too much competition for the villages. The sense of community was born from the small villages and eventually moved on to the bigger towns.



*The Kartak General Store located in Bechyn in Henryville Township.  
(Photo courtesy of Janice Olsen)*