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## **Youth Retention Efforts in Valley County**

(Ord, NE) – The Valley County Community Foundation Fund and the Ord Area Chamber of Commerce are collaborating in an effort to increase awareness among local high school seniors of the opportunities to remain in or return to Valley County.

Throughout the past few weeks, Kristina Volf, Marketing Specialist with the Ord Area Chamber, and Dahn Hagge, Coordinator of the VCCFF, met with a total of 62 Valley County high school seniors in Arcadia, North Loup-Scotia, and Ord. The seniors were presented with information on the potential for career opportunities with local businesses and the local incentives that are available to start their own business if they choose to return to Valley County.



*North Loup-Scotia High School Seniors*

As a graduation gift, each senior received a USB flash drive which contained the information that was presented to them on the opportunities to live, work, and play in Valley County in hopes that they will refer to the information in the future when they are choosing where to apply for internships, start their careers, or raise their family. Along with the information on career opportunities and business incentives, the documents on the flash drive also contained photos of the area, links to national publications featuring Valley County, links to both organization's social media sites, and the contact information for the Chamber and VCCFF. Administrators and staff from each school system also provided encouraging quotes for the students as well as the schools mission statement, contact information, and their class motto to include on the flash drive.

With regard to the students' responses to the presentation, Kristina Volf states "Of all the seniors we met with, more than 30 expressed an interest in returning to Valley County at some point in the future. This proves we need to connect with the young people in our community before we lose them to larger metropolitan areas. Encouraging them that they can have an exceptional quality of life in a rural community can be extremely powerful." In order to maintain a relationship with these Valley County alumni, occasional emails will be sent with information and updates on projects, job opportunities, and other community news.

Youth retention is vital to the future of our community and aligns with the missions of both the Ord Area Chamber of Commerce and the Valley County Community Foundation Fund. Youth



*Arcadia High School Seniors*

returning to our community would not only have the potential to generate new businesses but to benefit existing businesses by providing them with a talented workforce. Both the Chamber and VCCFF plan to continue to work together to develop various youth retention campaigns in the future.