



## SESSION DESCRIPTIONS AND SPEAKERS

Wednesday, November 6, 2019

**11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

**Pre-Conference Session: The Talent Toolbox for Rural Economic Developers, Janet Ady, President and CEO, Ady Advantage**

Virtually every community in America is experiencing one form or another of talent issues, and not surprisingly, rural communities are no exception. At times, the thought of overcoming one of the biggest challenges that economic developers have ever faced can seem overwhelming. But hope is here! In this session, Janet Ady from Ady Advantage will draw on hundreds of hours of research that she and her team have done over the past 18 months to catalog and analyze over 250 successful talent initiatives that communities have implemented. From this research, Janet learned that there is a practical approach to addressing even the toughest talent issues. During this session, you will learn:

- How talent fits into the economic development landscape today.
- What the three "legs of the stool" of talent development are and the seven broad talent strategies on which they are based.
- Best practices in how to address your community's talent issues • Specific examples of successful talent strategies to apply to your own community

**Janet Ady** is the president of Ady Advantage, an economic development and site selection consultancy she founded in 2003. Her interest in talent culminated in the publishing of *The Talent Toolbox*; since then, she and her team have expanded on this original framework to include the identification and analysis of over 250 talent initiatives from around the country, with a focus on those in rural communities. Her focus is on helping communities apply these learnings to their communities' specific talent issues. Ady Advantage provides research, marketing, and strategic planning services to utilities and economic developers on the topics of talent development and business development.



**3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.**

**Keynote: Where Do We Stand Now?: The Transition Economy, Chris Kuehl, Managing Director, Armada Corporate Intelligence**

Now that we have most of 2019 behind us, we can take time to reflect on where we are. We started out strong enough but faded as the year progressed and suddenly there was recession talk. Global trade has dominated the list of concerns but the crisis in farm country has been a close second. What will 2020 bring other than the trials and tribulations of an election year?



**Dr. Chris Kuehl** is a Managing Director of Armada Corporate Intelligence. He provides forecasts and strategic guidance for a wide variety of corporate clients around the world. He is the chief economist for several national and international organizations – Fabricators and Manufacturers Association, National Association of Credit Management, Finance, Credit and International Business and the Business Information Industry Association. He is also the economic analyst for several state accounting societies – Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee and Kansas. Prior to starting Armada in 1999 he was a professor of economics and finance for 15 years – teaching in the US, Hungary, Russia, Estonia, Singapore and Taiwan. He holds advanced degrees in economics, Soviet studies and East Asian studies. Chris is the author of *Business Intelligence Briefs* and *Executive Intelligence Briefs* - both publications from Armada. He is also responsible for the *Credit Manager's Index* from NACM and *Fabrinomics* from the FMA.

**4:55 p.m. – 5:55 p.m.**

**General Session: A Stroll Down Main Street with Touchstone Energy, *Scott Bialick, Senior Manager of Business Development, and Josh McGhee, Strategic Communications Manager***

How can NREDA members become the spark that ignites economic development in their communities? We look at a multitude of real world examples of rural organizations uniting to get impactful projects off the ground.



**Scott Bialick** is the Senior Manager of Business Development for Touchstone Energy Cooperatives (Arlington, VA). Over the course of 13 years with Touchstone Energy, his responsibilities have included; advertising, educational kits for schools, Co-op Web Builder and coordinating with the hot air balloon team. Currently he manages the Co-op Connections Program, a free member benefit with over 25 million cards in circulation and more than \$110 million in member savings. In addition, he helped create Touchstone Energy's Key Accounts Community which includes training classes, mentoring, survey tools, a webinar series and more. He is

also a liaison between national energy managers and the electric cooperatives. He serves on the National Rural Economic Developers Association Board and has helped cultivate the Main Street Initiative. Scott grew up in Queens, NY and graduated with a double major in finance and marketing from The George Washington University. Scott is a huge sports fan, movie buff and loves pub trivia and fantasy sports.

**Josh McGhee** is the Strategic Communications Manager at Touchstone Energy. He develops and designs program resources and materials to promote member engagement with the 42 million cooperative member-owners across the nation. As part of the national staff, he supports member cooperatives in communicating the cooperative difference through member relations, internal and external communications, Annual NET Conference, creative national advertising and energy programs. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communication Studies: Public Relations and Advertising from Liberty University in Virginia. He has been a Public Address Announcer and Broadcaster for NCAA Division 1 sports teams and an AAA minor league baseball team in MD. He enjoys leading the worship programs at this local church and enjoys boating in his spare time. Touchstone Energy is headquartered at NRECA in Arlington, VA.



### Thursday, November 7, 2019

**8:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.**

**Mobile Classrooms**

**Blue Valley CAPs - Where Students Lead: the CAPs Profession-Based Learning Model in Action**

Attendees to this Mobile Classroom will experience cutting-edge, profession-based learning in action. Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) programs are nationally recognized, innovative high school programs. Students fast forward into their future and are fully immersed in a professional culture, solving real world problems, using industry standard tools and are mentored by actual employers, all while receiving high school and college credit. CAPS is an example of how business, community and public education can partner to produce personalized learning experiences that educate the workforce of tomorrow, especially in high skill, high demand jobs.



**Corey Mohn** is the Executive Director of the Blue Valley Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS), a program that empowers high school students to fast-forward into their future through hands-on work, real-world business projects, and the development of professional skills. Prior to CAPS, Corey served as the Director of Statewide Programs for the Kansas Center for Entrepreneurship (DBA NetWork Kansas). In July 2015, CAPS launched the CAPS Network, a consortium of school programs across the United States committed to this model of profession-based education. In less than two years, the network has grown to include more than 100 school districts across 14 states and two countries. Corey holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in political science and economics from Washington University in St. Louis and a master's in business administration from Baker University.

#### **Ennovation Center: Business Incubator**

Growing a business, no matter what the type has several common links. The Ennovation Center business incubator provides specialized and customized services at no additional cost to our clients. A business incubator creates an environment that is not just about having access to the right real estate. It's about the support system that builds with your business. As an entrepreneur you're focused on your product, finding customers and getting the job done. The Ennovation Center is a connection point and when students arrive, their support base is already growing.

**Xander Winkel** is considered an entrepreneurship enabler and an expert at connecting-the-dots. He is certified in Communications and Marketing. Xander's specialties include market positioning and promotion in the areas of ideation, marketing, branding, strategic placement and regulatory climate.



#### **Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation – Supporting Rural Entrepreneurs**

Most of the net new jobs in the U.S. are created by new and young companies. These ventures benefit all of us by solving problems in our communities and empowering individuals. Despite the widespread recognition of the benefits of entrepreneurship, we are facing an entrepreneurship deficit. Americans are starting new businesses at about half the rate they were a generation ago and rural entrepreneurs in particular face an uphill battle. The Kauffman Foundation supports communities in developing ecosystems that provide the resources necessary to launch and grow their ventures. Attendees will learn about the efforts of the Kauffman Foundation to support rural entrepreneurs, learn about existing resources, and participate in an interactive discussion of how we can work together to grow rural entrepreneurship in the future.

**Chris Harris** is a senior program officer in Entrepreneurship for the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, where he leads rural entrepreneurship support initiatives as part of the Entrepreneurship Support strategy, which seeks to build and expand the most effective entrepreneurial support models addressing critical barriers for entrepreneurs across the region. The strategy includes a focus on developing entrepreneurial ecosystems in rural communities and connecting those ecosystems with national entrepreneurship networks. Prior to joining the Kauffman Foundation, Harris worked for the Kansas Department of Commerce, where he managed and developed programs to support nonprofit capital campaigns, early-stage equity funding for startups, and support rural community development.



**1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

#### **General Session: Takeaways from the Mobile Classroom**

Mobile Classroom Hosts will share highlights and ideas from Blue Valley CAPS, the Ennovation Center and the Kauffman Center mobile classrooms.

**2:20 p.m. – 3:20 p.m. Breakout Sessions**

**Technology Panel: Driving Toward the Rural Future: Smart Mobility for Rural Spaces** *Josh Seidemann, VP of Policy, NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association and Eric Phillips, Economic Development Director, Marysville/Union County*

In 2016, the City of Marysville teamed up with Union County and the City of Dublin to improve connectivity with a plan to extend fiber and mobility options to its residents and businesses. The three governments formed the NW 33 Innovation Corridor Council of Governments (COG) which was successful in receiving a \$5.9M Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) grant from USDOT. This grant set the stage for the creation of the 33 Smart Mobility Corridor (33 SMC), a 35-mile highway test corridor between Dublin, Marysville, and East Liberty. This corridor is anchored by automotive assets such as Honda of America, the Transportation Research Center and over 70 automotive companies, representing one of the largest concentrations of automotive companies in Ohio. The 33 SMC when completed, will include a 432-strand redundant fiber optic network, the installation of 62 roadside units, and upgrades to 32 traffic signals. The project specifically includes improvements to each of the 27 traffic signals – making them “smart” - in the City of Marysville which will become the first fully connected rural community in the world. To-date, over \$93 million has been pledged by public and private partners 33 SMC. The 33 SMC will benefit the public and business community by improving broadband connectivity, travel times, improving highway safety, reducing carbon emissions, optimizing freight delivery, and ensuring that transportation systems are fully accessible and integrated. Each year technological advancements are being made to automobiles including voice messaging that will warn drivers of potential crashes or safety issues. The 33 SMC will become a test bed for smart mobility technologies that will eventually lead to improving human mobility. In addition to this effort, Marysville and Union County are participating in statewide and regional efforts to train and promote communities on how they should prepare for smart mobility. For more information about the 33 Smart Mobility Corridor, please visit [www.33smartcorridor.com](http://www.33smartcorridor.com).



**Joshua Seidemann** is Vice President of Policy of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association. Josh focuses on Federal regulatory issues as well as technology and economic factors affecting the rural telecom industry. He is a regular contributor to the NTCA blog and other media. Josh holds a B.A. degree in Economics and Speech/Drama and a law degree, both from Yeshiva University. He is admitted to practice in New Jersey, New York, and the District of Columbia.

**Eric Phillips** has served as the Marysville/Union County Economic Development Director since February 2001. In this role, he also serves as the Executive Director of the Community Improvement Corporation and the Marysville-Union County Port Authority. He is also involved in many regional organizations including the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) serving as Past Chair, Columbus 2020 Board of Directors serving as Secretary, and the Mid-Ohio Development Exchange (MODE) Board of Directors (Past President) serving as the Regional Economic Development Representative. In 2014, MORPC acknowledged his regional leadership recognizing him with the William H. Anderson Award for outstanding Board leadership. Mr. Phillips has led or closely involved with various programs and projects including two revisions to the community economic development strategy, adoption of a county-wide economic development incentive policy, development of a bikeway plan, development of the 33 Innovation Park, procurement of a state approved jobs ready site and a certified site, various grant awards exceeding \$30M, implementation of a county-wide workforce strategy, and working closely with companies in the attraction and retention of jobs, payroll and investment. He has played a key role in the development and implementation of the 33 Smart Mobility Project. The goal of this project is to create one of the most advanced proving grounds for connected and autonomous vehicles that will include on-the-road and off-the-road testing in rural, exurban, suburban, and urban settings. Nearly \$100M has been committed by public and private sources to

make this project a reality. Mr. Phillips earned his undergraduate degree from Muskingum University, and a Master in City and Regional Planning and a Master of Art in Public Policy and Management from The Ohio State University.

**Innovation Panel - Tech Entrepreneurs Changing Access in Rural America, *Taylor Siebert, Founder and CEO of Striv, Inc., and Trevor McKeeman, CEO/Founder of HitchPin*  
Sponsored by Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

One person with an innovative idea can identify a need, start a company and transform a community. Entrepreneurs are the driving force in economic development. They are often the difference between communities that grow and those that fade away. Meet two entrepreneurs that are creating and using technology to provide more access to opportunity in rural America, Taylor Siebert, CEO/Founder of Striv, Inc. and Trevor McKeeman, CEO/Founder of HitchPin.

Taylor and Trevor will share their stories of building companies in their communities and how their businesses are serving rural economic development.

*HitchPin is the future of farming. It is an app that connects farmers who need a service or product with others that can provide it. Think Airbnb or Uber for agriculture. Today's Farmers book flights, hotels, and cars online. Now they can use an app to order harvest services in 60 seconds vs spending all day on the phone. This is particularly important now as farmers need to increase revenue (provide a service) or decrease costs (hire it cheaper). It also provides a new channel for the next generation to get involved in agriculture even if they don't come from a large farming operation. Hopefully this provides more opportunities for people to stay and return to rural communities.*

*Striv, Inc is a live video streaming platform built for schools to share their events LIVE online. Live streaming provides a great way for schools to connect with those who are unable to attend events. From grandparents to alumni, live streaming is a great tool to reach out to fans from a distance.*



**Trevor McKeeman** is a founder, CEO, Serial Tech Entrepreneur, Inventor, Systems Thinker, Father, Pilot, K-State, MIT, Harvard Venture Capital /Private Equity, Bank Board Member, Farmer, Supporter of other Startups, Interested in working with others to make the world better with tech.



**Taylor Siebert** has found that through servant leadership, working hard comes naturally, with connections that actually hold value. He is passionate about providing education to students interested in content creation. Taylor loves people, social media and creating content through video, photography and blogging.

**Entrepreneur Led Development – Pathways to Rural Community Prosperity, *Don Macke, Co-Director, e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, and Erik Pedersen, Director of E-Communities, NetWork Kansas***

This session will provide foundational and field tested insight on entrepreneur-led rural economic development. Don Macke will provide e2's emerging Rural Community Prosperity Development Framework and illustrate how entrepreneur-led development connects technology and innovation to drive smart development. He will share lessons learned from Ord, Nebraska and its transformative success. Erik Pederson will share lessons learned from NetWork Kansas' Entrepreneurial Communities Program. E-Communities and NetWork Kansas is America's longest running, at-scale and impactful statewide rural entrepreneurship initiative. Erik will share the NetWork Kansas development model with illustrations from some its E-Communities. This session will be interactive with plenty of time for questions and comments.



**Don Macke** leads e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (formerly the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship), a new initiative with NetWork Kansas to build sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems across North America. Don has over 40 years of community economic development and policy experience. He was most recently the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the national Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. Through this work, Don helps communities and regions throughout North America grow entrepreneur-focused economic development strategies and ecosystems. Don calls Nebraska home and he is a proud resident of America's Great Plains Region.



As the Vice President of Entrepreneurship for NetWork Kansas, **Erik Pedersen** is responsible for all aspects of the Entrepreneurship (E-) Community Partnership. An E-Community uses a local leadership team to oversee a loan fund, engage with resources and implement programs and initiatives that will cultivate an entrepreneurial environment in rural Kansas communities as well as distressed areas of urban communities. To date, the 60 E-Communities have provided over \$18.9M in matching loans and grants to over 560 businesses. Erik began his career in 1990 when he went to work for a Wichita-based technology startup company, Brite Voice Systems. In 1997, Erik left Brite Voice to co-start a manufactured housing dealership in Wichita. The business was later sold to the largest mobile home manufacturer in the country, Champion Enterprises, and Erik remained with Champion until May, 2005 when he was hired to help start NetWork Kansas. Erik graduated from Friends University in 1988 with a BA in business administration. Erik and his wife, Kristi, have been married for 26 years. They have two children; Brooke, who graduated from Wichita State University in December and is now in the Doctorate of Physical Therapy program at Wichita State University, and Dane, a Junior at Tabor College in Hillsboro, KS who is currently serving an internship with a professional soccer organization in Tennessee, the Chattanooga Football Club.

**3:40 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.**

**General Session: Nebraska Public Power District STEM Connections Lab model, *Chad Johnson, Senior Education Specialist, Nebraska Public Power District, and Nex-Generation Round Up for Youth programs, Mendi Anschutz, Economic Development Specialist, Nex-Tech LLC.***

Investing in youth education is not only an important public relations strategy it is an essential workforce development effort. Nebraska Public Power District introduced a traveling makerspace called the STEM Connections Lab to give Nebraska students innovative opportunities to learn valuable workforce skills. NPPD's initiative is designed to provide resources, opportunities, and events that build a culture of innovation through the integration of business, education, and community. Our motto: Figuring it out is an employable skill! Come figure out how you can engage your future workforce.

Nex-Generation Round Up for Youth programs are to educate students (grade school through college) about local career opportunities by providing and supporting programs in career development, entrepreneurship and internships. Through these efforts, we hope to foster a positive sense of community and encourage youth to remain or return home to prosper.

**Chad Johnson**, Senior Education Specialist for Nebraska Public Power District, is a former classroom teacher and informal science educator. Chad now leads NPPD's education team in their efforts to teach Nebraska students about electrical safety, technical skills, and potential public power careers. Chad was recently given the American Public Power Associations Energy Innovator Award for the development of NPPD's Pathways to a Technical Future program. Chad was a NASA MESSENGER program fellow and was awarded the Association of Science and Technology Centers Leading Edge Award. Currently, Chad spearheads NPPD's efforts to bring competitive robotics to rural Nebraska and runs his own non-profit robotics program.





**Mendi Anschutz**, Economic Development Specialist, began her career with Nex-Tech, Inc. in 2008. She is responsible for assisting communities in the retention, recruitment and expansion of industrial, commercial and retail businesses as well as assisting schools, municipalities and healthcare organizations. She also is responsible for managing the company's Revolving Loan Fund and packaging Rural Economic Development Loan Grant (REDLG) applications. Since 2013, Mendi has been active in the creation and expansion of the non-profit organization Nex-Generation Round Up for Youth, Inc. by facilitating and training youth in career development and internship programs as well as writing numerous grants for the organization. Prior to joining Nex-Tech, Inc., Mendi spent 10 years working for the economic development organization in Hays and Ellis County, Kansas. Mendi is a proud graduate of Fort Hays State University, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication, with an emphasis in Public Relations.

### Friday, November 8, 2019

**8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.**

#### **Breakout Sessions**

#### **Virtual Reality for Economic Development**

***Aaron Brossoit CEO and founder, Golden Shovel Agency***

Few technologies are changing the way economic developers communicate with prospective businesses and talent more than virtual reality. We will explore how VR is being used successfully by rural EDOs and utilities to promote their communities to site selectors and talent. We will demonstrate how VR is used locally and internationally and what to expect over the next year and beyond. This exciting new technology is why the Financial Times recognized virtual reality as a 2018 trend economic developers cannot ignore.

**Aaron Brossoit** is CEO and a founder at Golden Shovel Agency, a firm specializing in communications for economic development. Aaron has over 12 years' experience working in the economic development industry and 20 years as a marketing professional. He has led the creation of communication tools and services currently supporting over 150 economic development organizations across North America.



Aaron's core competencies include web development, marketing strategy, branding and communications. His work has been awarded through a variety of National, Regional and State award programs. He is a sought-after presenter and thought leader at industry conferences with a focus on new trends in business and workforce attraction. Aaron and his team pioneered the first virtual reality tools for the economic development industry and unveiled them at the 2017 IEDC Annual Conference in Toronto.

#### **If You Don't Address Your Community's Broadband Divide, Who Will?**

***Ken Johnson, Senior Vice President, Broadband Programs, NRTC***

No one disputes the value of broadband to a community – for economic development, education, health and other vital applications. But, delivering broadband to more sparsely populated areas is a challenge. And, for-profit companies have made promises for years and not delivered. Organizations like yours are well positioned to make a difference and deliver where others have not. Hear about how one rural stakeholder made a HUGE impact in their community delivering broadband and learn how technology, partnership and funding options can help you do the same.

Ken Johnson joined NRTC in November 2018 and serves as Senior Vice President, Broadband Programs. Mr. Johnson provides hands-on experience and expertise to NRTC's rural electric and telephone members on broadband feasibility as they look to deploy utility backbone and residential broadband networks and applications to their members. Prior to joining NRTC, Mr. Johnson served as administrator for the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an operating unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development agency. He was appointed to that role by President Donald J. Trump in February 2018. For 13 years prior to his government service, Mr. Johnson served as General Manager/CEO of Co-Mo Electric Cooperative and President for Co-Mo Connect in Tipton, MO. Under Johnson's leadership, Co-Mo was the first rural electric cooperative to deploy a fiber-to-the-home network to all its members without federal or state funding, providing gigabit internet, video and voice services to nearly 16,000 subscribers. Previously, Johnson was a director and past president for Central Electric Power Cooperative in Missouri and a director for the Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives, where he served on the Executive and Legislative committees. Johnson was also General Manager for Twin Valleys PPD in Nebraska after beginning his career with the Nebraska Public Power District. He earned an undergraduate degree from Kearney State College and is a graduate of the NRECA Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program. Ken grew up on a farm near Edgar, NE and has spent his life working and serving rural America. He and his wife cherish spending time with their children and grandchildren.



#### **Kentucky Fried Economic Development**

##### ***Brad Thomas, Economic Development Manager, Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives***

The original recipe for success for Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives was the convergence of technology and data to showcase opportunities available for development. By utilizing today's technology, Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives are able to tell a different type of story about rural Kentucky. Brad Thomas will share examples of different types of technology and how it supports KTEC's rural development strategies.

**Brad Thomas** is the Manager of Economic Development for Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives. His responsibilities include promotion and development of economic development opportunities for the 16 owner/member electric co-operatives that represent 87 counties and over one million Kentuckians. He assists existing industries with growth and expansion issues as well as recruiting new business opportunities to the state. Brad has led efforts in developing new tools to help tell the cooperatives' story for economic development purposes. The tools include a mobile app and the use of drones to showcase industrial sites that has led to record levels of jobs and investment as well as substantial increase in industrial electric usage for the owner/member cooperatives. His work has been recognized with awards by the International Economic Development Council; Southern Economic Development Council; National Rural Economic Developers Association and American Council of Engineering Companies. Brad was named as one of North America's Top 50 Economic Developers for 2019 by Consultant Connect. Brad currently serves as a Board Member for the Kentucky Aerospace Industry Consortium as well as the Kentucky Association for Economic Development. Brad is a graduate of Eastern Kentucky University and is married to his wife Renee' with whom he raises their daughter Logan and two sons Canyon and Carson in Frankfort.



**10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

#### **General Session: The Business of Life & The Life of Business**

Perspective, attitudes, ethics and a sense of humor....these attributes help to not only define us, but determine the quality of our leadership, management, our health, wellbeing and the happiness of both our professional environment and our personal lives. This session will be filled with laughter, tips and tools you can immediately apply to your daily walk!

**T. Marni Vos's** Keynotes are original in style, extremely funny, and uplifting in content. Vos entertains as she motivates her audience to be top performers in their work and as individuals. An award winning humorist and former educator, Marni is as funny as she is inspiring. Her humor is fresh, refreshing, honest and clean. In today's business world, where every skill counts, T. Marni can provide the winning edge that resets attitudes, rejuvenates individuals and renews communities. She leaves her audiences full of laughter, free of stress and ready for change.

