



BETH BOHLING/Tribune

Larry Yost (left) of the Superior Pawnee Computer Society and Moses Kong of Lincoln Sunday visit the Mullet Building in downtown Superior, where computers bound for Sudan will be refurbished.

Sudan computer project finds home in Superior

BETH BOHLING
Hastings Tribune

SUPERIOR — A Sudanese who will be in charge of refurbishing computers for the Superior Pawnee Computer Society to send to South Sudan inspected possible quarters for the project Sunday.

The work is expected to bring at least three Sudanese to Superior to work on computers.

Moses Kong of Lincoln, who has an associate's degree in computer science from Hamilton College there, approved use of the Mullet Building for preparing the computers for use in Africa. He indicated what additional wiring would be necessary.

Next weekend, Kong will travel to Tulsa, Okla., with Sharon and Larry Yost, SPCS president and vice president, to pick up African Imaging Machines from Don Singleton of the Helping Tulsa Program. Kong will advise what should be included.

Singleton helped the Yosts get started refurbishing and giving away used computers in May 2004. Since then, the SPCS has prepared and donated more than 300 computers to schools, churches, nursing homes, senior centers, after-school programs and other nonprofit agencies, mostly in Nebraska.

The gift of three computers to a Sudanese church in Grand Island alerted Kong and his countrymen to the possibility of refurbished computers being available for use in South Sudan, which suffers from the ravages of 21 years of civil war.

The first request was for computers for training centers Guik Rut of Omaha plans to establish to educate people in South Sudan and prepare them for jobs.

The first 300 computers are scheduled to be ready by Dec. 1 for shipment to Nairobi, Kenya, where the United States

Agency for International Development has its Sudan office.

Although a peace treaty was signed between the government of Sudan and southern Sudan in January, the southern Sudanese say the government has not lived up to its agreement to vacate the area.

A delegation including Salva Kiir, president of the Government of South Sudan, is visiting the United States at the present time. The Sudanese are asking the U.S. State Department to monitor the situation.

The computers will be held in Nairobi until it is considered safe to take them to Juba in Sudan. Rut plans to return to Sudan with the delegation in order to locate a site for the first training center there, Kong said.

Accessing used computers to refurbish is expedited by SPCS's relationship with the National Cristina Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation dedicated to the support of training through donated used technology.

Other computers have come from individual donors, government agencies and area groups, such as Hastings Senior High School and Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital.

Kong said there would be no problem with having the computers ready to ship by Dec. 1.

"Getting the money for shipping expenses will be the difficult part," he said.

With Kong overseeing refurbishing, Yost will turn his attention to a massive fundraising campaign. He said a media presentation on the plight of the South Sudanese was being readied to show to foundations, churches and other organizations, beginning in Nebraska.

Sudanese communities, which exist in most major cities, also will be asked to contribute, he said.

Rural tourism big draw

The Associated Press
SCOTTSTBLUFF — Simple experiences that rural residents may take for granted — such as driving cattle or watching birds — can be a big draw for tourists, panelists said at a recent conference on community improvement.

People want to reconnect with a rural lifestyle and will pay to do so, said Karen Kollars, agri-tourism consultant with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Residents of rural communities need to take a look around them and determine how they can help people experience the rural lifestyle, Kollars said at the Nebraska Community Improvement Program conference at the Gering Civic Center on Friday.

"Even if it is just listening to the silence," Kollars said, suggesting how people can determine what they have to offer.

Some people may want to escape their busy lives in larger cities, she said, so they will want to experience all facets of rural

life, suggesting they might want to visit corn mazes or wineries.

But Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel, a University of Nebraska Extension Educator from Scottsbluff, said communities must make sure that they provide exceptional customer service to visitors.

In 2004 there was \$2.4 billion spent in the state and 43,000 people had tourism-related jobs. A dollar spent by a tourist had an economic impact of \$2.70. She said people need to get tourists to stay longer, meaning they'll spend more money. She said communities need to promote their hidden treasures.

"We just need to slow them down," Burkhart-Kriesel said.

A new "Red Carpet" program has started to help towns stress customer service, which can be simple as giving directions to knowing what is going on in town and how to connect tourists with available resources.

Communities wishing to join the program pay \$1,250, but that guarantees that facilitators

and trainers will come to town at least five times and conduct follow-up sessions, she said.

In another session at the conference, people heard how they can improve their towns by having specialists conduct formal evaluations to see what people want done in the near and distant future, said Mary Randolph, executive director of the Wyoming Rural Development Council. Specialists come in and hold listening sessions, keying in on major challenges, and strengths and assets.

"The whole idea is to get as many people as possible to participate," Randolph said.

The formal evaluation has been successful in many Wyoming communities, she said, helping them to craft after-school programs and youth groups.

Randolph said, to get a similar program going in Nebraska, there would be a resource specialist training session on Dec. 13 in North Platte.

Parade to honor local veterans

JOHN HUTHMACHER
Hastings Tribune

Representatives from the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force (or Corps) and Marines will assume roles of honor as marshals in the Veterans Recognition Parade set to roll at 10:30 a.m. Saturday from the city parking lot on Fourth Street.

Sponsored by Hastings Masonic Lodge No. 50, the parade will kick off a day of veterans recognition events that includes a vacant chair ceremony sponsored by Hastings Midwest Lodge No. 317 at 1 p.m. at the Masonic Center, Fourth Street and Hastings Avenue, and a pair of patriotic concerts performed by Chorus of the Plains at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at the center.

The parade will travel east on Fourth Street, turn south on St. Joseph Avenue, west on Second Street, north on Lincoln Avenue, east on Fourth Street, and south on Hastings Avenue back to the parking lot.

Troops from Hastings National Guard Unit Troop A of the 167th Cavalry are expected to participate in the parade, subject to availability, said Phil Odum, master of Hastings Lodge No. 50.

"The motivation behind it is the recognition of

our veterans here in Hastings, Adams County and south central Nebraska," Odum said. "During the Vietnam era, veterans were not recognized for the work they did on behalf of their country. Today, there's a great desire to make sure that anyone who goes off to war or conflict is recognized in some way."

All area veterans and their families are invited to participate in the parade, which Odum said he hopes will become an annual event.

A semi tractor-trailer truck will provide transportation for those unable to walk.

"People that are associated with the military in some way, shape or form and families can take part right up until the time we walk out of the city parking lot," he said. "I think it will be a lot of fun."

Many veterans contacted to participate in the parade have expressed gratitude for the gesture of acknowledgment, Odum said.

"What I'm hearing from veterans is that they really appreciate the opportunity to be part of it," he said. "We've had lots of 'thanks you's' for doing this."

For information or to participate, call Odum at (402) 463-4909.

First 22 tourism grants given

SCOTT BAUER
The Associated Press

LINCOLN — From Gering to Omaha, 22 state tourism projects are benefiting from a new grant program designed to increase the number of people who travel to and within Nebraska.

The \$350,000 in grants announced today by Gov. Dave Heineman will be used for such things as promoting Lewis and Clark activities, the Kearney archway and attractions in Cherry County.

Heineman and state tourism director Dan Curran hailed the new grants — approved by the Legislature earlier this year — as a step forward in promoting Nebraska's tourism industry.

"This is a great opportunity for

Nebraska," Curran said. With more people taking shorter trips closer to home, tourism destinations now include such things as agriculture-centered tourism, hiking and bird-watching, he said. Nebraska is poised to capitalize in all of those areas, Curran said.

Next year \$500,000 will be available for the grants, which range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and require matching funds. This year there were 48 applicants asking for \$900,000, which Heineman said shows the need and interest in beefing

up the state's tourism industry.

The grants are limited to marketing activities by government entities and nonprofits.

The grants can be used for the production and placement of mass media advertising; Web site development; production and printing of travel brochures; direct mail advertising; participation at travel, trade and sports shows; materials and displays for convention sales; marketing research; and the development of billboard messages.

Alliance man sues city, police officers

The Associated Press

ALLIANCE — An Alliance man has filed a lawsuit against the city of Alliance and four police officers for allegedly using excessive force and falsely arresting him in August.

Police stopped 66-year-old Ventura Moreno's car on August 31 while investigating a report that Moreno had held a gun on employees at a Pamida Store.

Moreno said the officers pulled him out of his car, threw him to the ground face first, struck him numerous times, pointed a gun in his face, handcuffed him and booked him

into the Box Butte County Jail.

Moreno was charged with using a weapon to commit a felony and two counts of terroristic threats, but a County Judge James Hansen dismissed those felonies because there wasn't

enough evidence to justify a trial.

Moreno still faces a county court trial on Dec. 13 for two misdemeanor counts of carrying a concealed weapon.

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