

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The U.S. Census Bureau launched community operations this week all over the country. One such event was held in North Platte Tuesday.

Vic Gentry, manager of the Census office in North Platte, said lunch, entertainment and a recruiting station were part of the kickoff in his area. Ben Franklin, Buffalo Bill and state and local officials were expected to attend.

With the census count just four months away, Census operations will become increasingly visible in local communities.

Gentry said 17 recruiting assistants have been hired across the state of Nebraska, with one in this area. They were trained last week, and are now in the field looking for people interested in becoming Census takers.

Recruiting and testing will be conducted beginning next week. A site in Imperial will be announced later, Gentry said.

The recruiters are in every county, looking for the 1,000 workers Gentry said he hopes to hire from his office. Overall, 5,000 will be hired in Nebraska.

"We didn't realize in our minds" how many workers were needed, Gentry commented. For instance, in "little teeny counties up north we'll need seven to eight people."

Gentry estimated that 10-15 people will be hired in Chase County alone.

"As we receive the number of households in Chase County, we have to recruit 150 percent of those numbers," Gentry noted.

Counters will be hired after fingerprinting, testing and background checks have been made. Gentry hopes to have recruiting done by the end of the year and training done by the end of January, 2010.

Census questionnaires will be mailed or delivered to households in March of 2010. Upon receipt, those in the households should complete the 10-question form and mail it back right away.

If the form isn't returned by early April, a census worker will hand-deliver another form, and will question the householder right on the spot, Gentry said.

"No one wants to get a knock on the door," he stated. It's very important that the household residents fill out the first form and mail it in immediately.

"Don't spend a lot of money out of our, the taxpayers', pockets" for a visit from a census worker, Gentry declared.

"We stand to lose \$1,114 per person in federal money to the state if a person isn't counted" in the Census, he stated.

In addition, for every one percent of the national population that must be counted by census takers, it costs \$90 million.

In the 2000 Census, Chase County matched the state response rate at 75 percent. Gentry hopes to increase that rate in 2010.

People interested in becoming census takers may contact Gentry's North Platte office at (308) 221-3040.