

By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor

The rainy day on Tuesday didn't affect the number of pluses that Imperial has, as judges from the Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) spent a couple of hours here.

For the third year, the city has been entered in the statewide program that recognizes communities of all population sizes for improvements they have completed, making life better for its residents.

What is highly emphasized in the NCIP program is the way grassroots volunteers are utilized in the success of the city's projects. For one specific award, collaborative efforts involving different government entities is the focus.

Imperial didn't have a problem showing any of that!

Special emphasis in Imperial's entries this year were improvements at Campbell Park, including the new playground equipment and removal of the old pool. Also highlighted was the opening celebration at Imperial's new pool/sports complex.

A host of volunteers worked with city staff installing the new playground equipment at Campbell Park. More volunteers were used to put up the new playground equipment near the pool. The Imperial Chamber coordinated all the fun events at the pool's grand opening event over Memorial Day weekend.

It's easy to see volunteerism is alive and well here.

The local NCIP committee also entered the new Career Academy Program for the Founders Award, which recognizes the workings of more than one government entity to complete a project. As you know, that program provides a pathway for high school students to remain in high school for one additional year, also taking college-level courses and utilizing a number of dual-credit classes. After the fifth year, the student graduates with both his/her high school and associate's degrees.

The city, Chase County Schools and Mid-Plains Community College worked together getting the Career Academy launched here.

The judges were here Tuesday to look at our community as a whole, as Imperial is considered for one of the NCIP top awards—the Governor's Community Spirit Award.

As the judges were taken on a 30-minute "windshield tour" of Imperial, I was even amazed at how much there was to show off here.

Highlighting the new pool/sports complex and Campbell Park improvements, they also got a drive-by look at the new Frenchman Valley Coop office complex, the new NRD building, the Imperial Heights/Parkview facilities, Pine Grove housing, our hospital and clinic, the recent improvements completed at Sunrise Apts., St. Patrick's new hall, and much more.

Of course, the NCIP committee also plugged the volunteer-run theatre, our great Chase County Fair.

I'm not making any predictions on whether Imperial will be an NCIP award-winner at the banquet next month.

I do know, however, that much of what gets done here is because we have a strong group of volunteers and community organizations, a lot of business and school support for improvements and progress and residents who are truly proud of what they have here.

And, they should be.