By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

Five $100 scholarships to help offset costs for attending the 2009 MarketPlace Entrepreneurial Conference next month are being offered by the city of Imperial.

Community Development Director Leslie Carlholm said the city of Imperial realizes the importance of small businesses to the local economy, and felt it important enough to allot funds for the scholarships in the budget this year.

The conference, this year in North Platte, will be held Wednesday, Feb. 25, at the Sandhills Convention Center. Early bird registration ends Feb. 11.

The conference will offer training, networking and professional development opportunities for startup and existing small businesses, service providers, rural communities and family farmers/ranchers.

“MarketPlace is for those committed to creating their own opportunities and shaping their own destiny through entrepreneurship,” said Chuck Hassebrook of the Center for Rural Affairs, host for the third annual event.

“It offers a space to share ideas and learn from each other,” he added.

MarketPlace will feature up to 50 booths filled with successful small businesses, service providers and others.

Attendees will also be able to meet with experts in many fields, including attorneys, CPAs, web designers and others who will be there to answer questions.

Those thinking about starting a business would gain from the conference. There will be educational tracks on business development, finance, marketing, community development, ag, technology, youth policy and Hispanic entrepreneurship.

Established businesses planning to expand in another area or just wanting new information will benefit, as well.

More information on the MarketPlace conference is available at the Center for Rural Affairs website: www.cfra.org/marketplace/home or by calling Carlholm at the city office, 882-4368. Her email address is lesliec@imperial-ne.com