

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The owners of Prairie States Communications and members of a high school business class have received financial assistance to attend MarketPlace, Nebraska's premier rural small business and entrepreneurship event in North Platte next week.

Leslie Carlholm, the city of Imperial economic development coordinator, said Jan and Rick Elliott were awarded a scholarship. Financial assistance was also granted to Chase County Schools teacher Sandy O'Neil and five of her students to participate in the youth track of MarketPlace.

MarketPlace, scheduled for Feb. 25, is a day focused on energizing small businesses and rural communities, Carlholm said.

"Participants learn vital business skills, network with other entrepreneurs and service providers, and discover ideas that work for small businesses and communities," she noted.

"We hope over time more and more of our local businesses will take advantage of the wonderful learning sessions and resources provided by the annual MarketPlace event," Carlholm stated.

She added that, "The city is very excited to have Sandy and her students participating in the 2009 MarketPlace. Researchers indicate that today's youth will be the most entrepreneurial generation ever."

Carlholm further commented, "This is a great opportunity to plant the seed of entrepreneurialism through exposure to successful young entrepreneurs."

"Recession Proof Your Business—Learn How at MarketPlace" will feature specialists from the Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Program.

"In this economy, many, if not most, small businesses are operating on very tight budgets to simply get by. Some call this 'bootstrapping' or operating on a 'shoestring,'" according to Jeff Reynolds of the Center for Rural Affairs. "In either case, it is possible to successfully operate a business on a shoestring."

MarketPlace, to be held at the Sand-hills Convention Center from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT, will also feature up to 50 booths filled with successful small businesses, service providers and other conference sponsors. Attendees will be able to meet with experts in many fields, such as attorneys, CPA's, web designers, etc.

For more information on MarketPlace, or to register, view <http://www.cfra.org/marketplace/home>, or contact Joy Marshall, joym@cfra.org, (402) 614-5558.

Next week, Feb. 21-28, is National Entrepreneurship Week.