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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**KEARNEY PREPARING ENTRY FOR “AMERICA’S BEST COMMUNITY” CONTEST**

Kearney, Neb. – Frontier Communications and DISH Network are launching “America’s Best Communities”, a three-year contest that provides a total of $10 million in seed money and other support to assist communities as they develop growth and revitalization plans. Kearney Mayor Stan Clouse is assembling a community team to develop an application for the City of Kearney.

Mayor Clouse is asking for community input to illustrate why Kearney is America’s best community and deserves the $3 million top award. Interested community members can share their testimonials at Community Partners’ video booth on Friday, February 27, at the World Theatre. Recording times will be from 1:00 - 1:30 p.m. and 4:30 - 5:00 p.m. All community members are welcome. This event is in conjunction with the Kearney Community Planning Summit hosted by City of Kearney on February 27 from 1:30 – 5:00 p.m.

“Kearney is America’s best, and we are excited to illustrate our story from the perspective of our community members”, said Mayor Stan Clouse. “Come share your story! Kearney has a lot to offer and will be very competitive on the national level.”

The “America’s Best Communities” contest will help address the need for growth by identifying and investing in innovative ideas that small cities and towns can use to build and sustain their local economies. The winning ideas then become available as a roadmap for growth for all rural communities across the U.S. In creating this contest, Frontier and DISH emphasized their commitment to supporting sustained economic success for rural communities, many of which have faced tough times in recent years.

 “To develop our application we are bringing members together from the Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Kearney, University of Nebraska at Kearney, and Economic Development Council of Buffalo County. Additional participants are welcome,” said Denise Zwiener, executive director of Buffalo County Community Partners. “The application requires a non-profit organization to serve as the backbone of the community process, and we are pleased to serve in that role.”

“Our planning team has met a few times to discuss our vision for this award. We need a plan that brings in the collective input of our residents in order for Kearney to be successful in winning $3 million. Friday will be a great moment for residents to share,” said Economic Development of Buffalo County Director Darren Robinson.

Communities must submit their preliminary application by March 25. Judges will then select up to 50 qualified applicants, each of which will be awarded $50,000 to develop their plans and proposals. These communities will then have seven months to refine and submit their final proposals in September, 2015. Up to 15 semifinalists will be selected in November, 2015, and will attend an “America’s Best Communities” summit in January, 2016, to present their proposals. Then, eight finalists will be selected and will each be awarded $100,000 to use implementing their plans. The top three contestants– those with the most innovative, effective proposals – will be awarded a total of $6 million in grand prizes in October, 2017.

“This contest is designed to challenge a community’s brightest and most innovative thinkers to develop meaningful strategies and plans that will transform their town or city,” said Maggie Wilderotter, Chairman and CEO of Frontier Communications. “Whether ideas come from an individual or a group, visionaries in a community can effect powerful transformations. We’re excited to see which ideas rise to the top and how they will help not only an applicant’s local community grow and thrive, but how the proposals can benefit all communities across America.”

Buffalo County Community Partners is a non-profit organization that seeks to assess, strengthen, and promote the health of Buffalo County through the promotion of the Buffalo County 2020 Vision. The 2020 Vision introduces five strategic directions and targets for attainment by the year 2020. For more information on how you can assist in building a healthier Buffalo County, visit bcchp.org.

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