

## April 2005 - Building Better Communities Award - Kensington Community Store

Building Better Communities Award - Kensington Community Store

Given on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives

by Congressman Jerry Moran

April 22, 2005

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the selfless efforts of the citizens of Kensington, Kansas in their work to re-open their community's grocery store.

A little more than 19 months ago, this community's only grocery store closed. This town of 511 people immediately felt the loss of the store. Residents no longer had local access to basic necessities such as dry goods and fresh cuts of meat. The closest grocery store was in the county seat of Smith Center-nearly 15 miles away. I know that most Members of Congress do not have to concern themselves with whether their communities have a grocery store. However, for many of the communities in my district, keeping the local grocery store open is a constant struggle.

The citizens of Kensington decided to take action. Following a community meeting, board members were elected to form The Kensington Community Store, Incorporated. This organization was created to oversee the construction and development of a non-profit community grocery store with noon deli.

Since that time, support for the project has been impressive and inspiring:

- The Kensington City Council committed to construct a 60' X 75' steel building;
  
- Several lots of ground were donated for building construction;
  
- Community "work nights" were held to ready the store for opening;
  
- Vo-tech classes at the local high school constructed metal and wood shelves;
  
- The local Lions Club assisted with interior construction of the store;

All totaled, more than \$130,000 has been raised to support the project. Donations of all sizes have come from more than 250 individuals, businesses, clubs and foundations. The final piece of the puzzle fell into place when an agreement was reached to share wholesale supply delivery dates with a grocery store in a community 27 miles down the road. The arrangement allows the store in Kensington to sell merchandise at competitive prices.

Thanks to a team effort, the Kensington Community Store is now a reality. According to John Struckhoff, chairman of the committee that organized the project, having a grocery store back in town provides an anchor business that can be used to attract other businesses to Kensington. It also helps stabilize property values and provides citizens of all ages a place to purchase groceries without having to leave town.

Mr. Struckhoff also noted that the whole experience has resulted in other benefits. "It is amazing how many individuals and groups donated money and time to this project," Struckhoff said. "This shows how a small town in Kansas can come together to support a project that provides a common good to all citizens. It really makes you proud to live in Kensington."

All across the state of Kansas are stories just like this one. Of neighbors helping neighbors, not because they have to, but because they want to. Because it is the right thing to do. Their efforts deserve our support and recognition.

Citizens throughout the First Congressional District of Kansas are working together to enhance the quality of life in their communities. The Kensington Community Store is a success story that demonstrates how teamwork and creative thinking can make a positive difference in rural America.