

### **Communities Helping Communities in Southwest Saskatchewan**

Ten rural communities across the Southwest will be partnering to conduct a survey on each others communities, to assist in the creation of strategies for rural growth. There will be 50 volunteers who have agreed to participate in this initiative from the communities of Assiniboia, Rockglen, Ogema, Willowbunch, Ponteix, Shaunavon, Kyle, Hazlet, Leader and Burstall.

This is just another project being launched through the Action Southwest partnership to support the growth of rural southwest communities. “The project is titled “First Impressions Community Exchange” and will offer communities a chance to see themselves through the eyes of a first-time visitor”, said Sandra Blyth Action Southwest Project Manager. Each community has been paired up with another community and each will pay the other an unannounced visit and a survey will be conducted.

“After you’ve lived in one place for awhile, you sometimes take for granted the things that attract people to your community”, says Edith Gibbings First Impressions Project Coordinator. “Or you may be unaware of aspects of your community that may be unappealing in the eyes of outsiders. The exchange gives a community an objective assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, and gives participants a chance to gather ideas from other communities dealing with similar development issues.”

Once again, an Action Southwest project is being considered a pilot project in the province with the potential to be delivered in other areas of Saskatchewan. The First Impressions project is role modeled after a world class initiative developed by the University of Wisconsin.

Leadership is being provided by Saskatchewan Regional Economic and Co-operative Development, Industry Canada, Southwest and Red Coat Regional Economic Development Authorities, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada-Rural Secretariat, Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services, Conseil de la Cooperation de la Saskatchewan, Southwest Community Futures Development Corporation, Southwest Credit Union, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and Sask Energy.

The results of the First Impressions Community Exchange will be presented at a public meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 8, 2007 in Swift Current. Everyone in the region will be invited to attend, so please mark your calendars.

If you want to learn more about the project visit [www.actionsouthwest.com](http://www.actionsouthwest.com) or call Action Southwest at 778-6445.

For more information, contact:

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