



Imperial's swimming pool and the adjacent Chase County Schools' sports complex are among the community efforts cited in Imperial's selection as the Governor's Showcase Community for 2012. Pool pa-

trons and athletes share the locker room areas in separate seasons, and the concession stand also serves both. A parking lot was built by the city and school to serve both facilities. (Republican file photo)

Nebraska Governor chooses Imperial as 2012 Showcase Community Award winner

By JAN SCHULTZ
THE IMPERIAL REPUBLICAN

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman chose Community Development Week, April 8-14, to put Imperial in the spotlight at a ceremony in Lincoln Monday.

Imperial city and community representatives gathered for a presentation in the Capitol Building when Imperial received the coveted Governor's Showcase Community Award.

This year, Imperial was the only community in the state presented the award, which can be given to up to three communities annually.

Hartington, in northeast Nebraska, earned honorable mention.

Leslie Carlholm, Imperial's community development director, was thrilled that Imperial was recognized.

"Receiving this award is a prestigious honor and the community should be proud of its accomplishments," she said.

"The quality of life we enjoy in Imperial and Chase County is founded on generations of volunteers planning and building for the future," she added.

She said it was wonderful to see Imperial recognized for its "can-do attitude" and community development successes.

To be considered for the award, communities must submit a five-page application with the following:

- 1) Identify community development goals and strategies;
- 2) How it combines local, state and federal resources to achieve those goals; and
- 3) Major projects accomplished with positive impacts on the community.

Projects completed in the last five years can be included in the application.

Imperial's application cited the huge support of volunteers that have been vital in accomplishing many of the projects.

In fact, the community's organization of Meeting of

Showcase Communities

The Governor's Showcase Communities since 2000 include:

- IMPERIAL**—2012
- CAMBRIDGE**—2011
- KEARNEY**—2011
- PLATTSMOUTH**—2011
- SCRIBNER**—2010
- FARNAM**—2009
- BURWELL**—2008
- BASSETT**—2007
- LAUREL**—2006
- ORD**—2005
- RAVENNA**—2004
- SOUTH SIOUX CITY**—2003
- LOUISVILLE**—2002
- AINSWORTH**—2001
- CENTRAL CITY**—2000

the Minds was one of the efforts noted as Imperial's accomplishments were read at the ceremony.

"Imperial's Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) committee members recognized the need to improve communication between local organizations to accomplish common goals and projects," reads the application.

From that came organization of Meeting of the Minds, a group that meets quarterly each year to share information on projects and discuss possible collaboration.

The city periodically schedules public strategic planning meetings after community surveys are conducted, from which volunteers and city staff set their goals.

Successful Imperial projects cited in the city's application included:

Chase County sports field and pool complex, noting the interlocal agreement between the school and city to get the facility built.

Park improvements, especially at Campbell Park which has seen new playground equipment installed and construction of a sturdy restroom



Imperial received this plaque in Lincoln Monday after its selection as the 2012 Governor's Showcase Community. (Republican photo)

complex spearheaded by the Lions Club.

Imperial's 125th celebration in 2010 over the 4th of July weekend.

The Career Academy program, a joint effort between Mid-Plains Community College and Chase County Schools. The program is designed so students can earn both a high school diploma and college Associates Degree with just one extra year beyond high school.

"Take Pride in Imperial" effort last summer encouraged by Mayor Dwight Coleman that cleaned up streets, painted street signs/curbs and other general cleanup by volunteers of all ages.

City gym facelift that included a floating Sports Court floor, new paint, new lighting and removal of old bleachers.

Imperial Theatre's renovations last year that added digital projection.

Addition of the child care center at Imperial's senior care facilities which is now serving more than 60 youngsters.

Also cited was Imperial's

passage of the one percent city sales tax in 2007, which has aided several of the projects above with financial support.

As an example, the community development sales tax fund is paying for the city's bond payments on the new pool.

Those funds have also helped leverage other grants and funding from such organizations as the Peter Kiewit Foundation, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission as well as local service organizations.

Carlholm said being a Governor's Showcase Community will be another "feather in its cap" for the city.

Gov. Heineman also took time Monday at the ceremony to sign a proclamation declaring this week Community Development Week in the state.

Other neighborhood efforts and individuals in Lincoln and Omaha were also recognized with awards Monday.

Representing Imperial at the ceremony were Carlholm, Mayor Coleman and his family, Supt. Matt Fisher and Jan Schultz; the latter two serve on the city's NCIP committee.

