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Contact: Laurie Groves, Iowa Farm Bureau, (515) 225-5414

**RENEW RURAL IOWA CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR HELPING
SMALL TOWN BUSINESSES & RURAL COMMUNITIES GROW**

Four Iowa companies qualify for Rural Vitality funds

WEST DES MOINES, IOWA – Nov. 27, 2007 –The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation’s (IFBF) rural Iowa business growth initiative, Renew Rural Iowa (RRIA) has reached several milestones in its first year. More than 500 companies have been educated and trained; and nearly 40 companies have received mentoring as a result of the program. Most recently, four rural Iowa companies have qualified for funding through the Rural Vitality Fund, part of the Renew Rural Iowa program.

Renew Rural Iowa was created in September of last year as an innovative model which combines mentoring and networking with access to rural vitality investment funds. The goal of the program is not focused solely on jobs, but on expanding the number and size of hometown businesses in rural Iowa.

“Farm Bureau has always been interested in the sustainability of rural Iowa; those communities, the families and schools are an integral part of Iowa’s character. We mentored several businesses in those towns that faced a variety of challenges to not only maintain their current employment base, but to grow as well,” said IFBF Senior Investment Manager Dave Sengpiel. “They only needed to walk through the doors of our Renew Rural Iowa seminars to find those solutions.”

“Some of those businesses are family-owned businesses who need help to bring in the next generation; some are existing businesses that have stalled out and need a fresh start; some are leaders with access to great technology, but they need help to get started or relocate to gain access to a technology transfer employee base. They all found benefit through the unique mentoring, networking and now funding options available through Renew Rural Iowa,” said RRIA Seminar Facilitator Curt Nelson.

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One example of a new company receiving RRIA funding that wants to locate in rural Iowa to capture that ‘technology transfer’ employee access is NewTech Ceramics. NewTech Ceramics develops a ceramic compound that is harder in composition and more durable than tungsten carbide. The product could greatly reduce wear and tear (and expense) for auto manufacturers of brake pads, snowplow blades, virtually any industry that involves metals, ceramics. “We are relocating to Boone because it’s a healthy community with close proximity to Iowa State University, where this product was developed in the ISU engineering lab,” says NewTech Ceramics COO George Wilson. “Boone is also close to the highly-skilled workforce required for our product development. But even a great idea wouldn’t have been realized without the expertise of the Renew Rural Iowa staff. It has been an absolute delight working with them.”

Another small town Iowa business assisted by Renew Rural Iowa and its Rural Vitality Fund is Nu-World Amaranth. Nu-World Amaranth, located in Dyersville, is a small, family-owned company that packages, mixes and bakes amaranth in a variety of foods. Amaranth, once an Aztec staple, is an ancient grain that nutritionists say has high fiber, amino acids, iron, calcium and a host of other minerals, and which provides important options for those with food allergies. The demand for amaranth goes beyond those with gluten allergies; consumers with allergies to dairy, casein, eggs, wheat, corn, rice, soy, oats or nuts are also asking for amaranth. “I thank Farm Bureau for seeing the potential of this company and giving us the kind of guidance we needed to grow through their Renew Rural Iowa program. Nu-World Amaranth has benefited Dyersville as well as a growing global need for healthy food. We needed assistance to take this company to the next generation, both in product line, and in business succession,” said Nu-World founder Larry Walters.

Precision Metal Works (PMW) from Maquoketa also gained access to Renew Rural Iowa funding. A manufacturer of high-quality parts washers and other products, they have been in operation for nearly 25 years, distributing their products under mostly private label names.

“Precision Metal Works is very pleased to have the opportunity to partner with the Renew Rural Iowa initiative. We have been operating in this community for almost 25 years and this investment will be a vital part of the continued growth and success of our business, and will allow us to expand in ways that would not be possible without this kind of assistance. We are looking forward to becoming a stronger member of the local community and providing both continued and additional employment for local workers, many with ties to the family farm,” said Jesse Cram, Co-Founder, Precision Metal Works.

The fourth company receiving funding comes from Elkader, Iowa. Reference LLC is an early-stage engineering company that has been designing technical products for more than a decade. They design and manufacture monitoring instruments that measure and record acceleration, motion, vibration and tilt. “I am looking to grow my business and help my community grow, as well. We are strongly committed to staying in this area, and we are thankful that there’s this kind of funding to help us meet our needs. As a non-traditional and innovative employer, we look forward to keeping this kind of talent and these resources here in Iowa,” said Chris Kavars, CEO, Reference LLC.

“Iowa Farm Bureau learned a lot in the last year about what it takes to help rural entrepreneurs,” said Sandy Ehrig, Iowa Farm Bureau economic development administrator. “It takes more than a local facility and traditional financing to make a business successful; it takes many great resources like the ones provided by Renew Rural Iowa, along with a whole community’s support, to achieve true rural vitality. We saw a lot of amazing examples of those communities working together.”

For more information on RRIA or companies that have gone through the program, visit www.renewruralIowa.com.

About Iowa Farm Bureau

The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation is a grassroots, statewide organization dedicated to enhancing the People, Progress and Pride of Iowa. More than 153,000 families in Iowa are Farm Bureau members, working together to achieve farm and rural prosperity. For more information about Farm Bureau and agriculture, visit the online media center at www.iowafarmbureau.com.