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News Release

Buy Iowa Online now available for entrepreneurs in southwest Iowa

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Buy Iowa Online (BIO) is a fully-automated e-commerce site which brings together the talented and innovative crafters, artisans and manufacturers who are the heart of this rural region so that shoppers can experience the entrepreneurial spirit and quality products available. The Rural Development Resource Center is launching this new project to provide a no-risk sales and advertising tool as a support system to its region's rural entrepreneurs who in turn invigorate their local economies as they broaden their sales markets. Slated for a November launch in order to capture the holiday shopping season, the RDRC staff is now actively signing up entrepreneurs who would like to participate.

A Web site presence can be an essential element of a marketing plan – especially for rural businesses to expand sales outside of local markets. For some, the cost in money and time to develop, maintain, advertise the site and fulfill orders can be prohibitive. Others are part-time and occasional retailers who need a site that is flexible in order to match their lifestyles. A site offering a critical mass of diverse products to attract ongoing shoppers and focused on branding southwest Iowa products is also an ideal second presence for those already hosting an independent site.

Buy Iowa Online will serve entrepreneurs within the 22-county service area of the Rural Development Resource Center. Products that qualify for the site must be created and made within the 22-county region. Projects made outside of the region but having a community theme such as a cookbook or imprinted apparel also qualify so community non-profits are also eligible. Those entrepreneurs encouraged to consider participation are artisans and handcrafters, authors, small manufacturers and nonperishable agricultural product such as soups, spices, gourmet vinegars, etc.

The Rural Development Resource Center's (RDRC) goal is to promote economic growth in Southwest Iowa by providing training, tools and resources to new and existing entrepreneurs. Services include full business training, conducting feasibility studies; writing business plans, preparing financial projections, marketing plans, organizational structure, and securing funding. It is a program of Grow Iowa Foundation, Inc. a nonprofit with a mission of rural development. The Southwest Iowa Coalition, Wallace Foundation for Rural Research and Development and Iowa State University Extension to Community Economic Development are the primary partners collaborating for the rural, regional development support system with Grow Iowa. The RDRC also houses Iowa's only rural business accelerator. Business Accelerators were developed and funded by the Iowa Legislature to propel Iowa's entrepreneurial efforts into successful businesses by leveraging the expertise of experienced professionals in this arena.

For more information about the RDRC or Buy Iowa Online visit www.EnterprisingIowans.com or call 712-623-5521. Applications for vendors can be downloaded from this Web site or acquired by contacting the office.