



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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RIBBON-CUTTING AND OPEN HOUSE HELD FOR ESTRELLA DEL NORTE

Alliance, Neb., November 7, 2002 – Celebrated in Alliance today was the completion of Estrella del Norte, an eight unit farm labor housing complex owned and managed by Panhandle Community Services of Gering, Nebraska. The housing complex, made possible through USDA Rural Development funds in excess of \$975,000, will provide affordable housing for migrant workers and transitional housing for the homeless.

"Panhandle Community Services is proud and privileged to be a part of Alliance with the addition of Estrella del Norte, which would not have been possible without the assistance of numerous individuals and groups. We feel certain Estrella del Norte will be a positive asset to the affordable housing stock of the community," stated Mike Minzey, housing director of Panhandle Community Services

Estrella del Norte consists of 9,072 sq. ft. that features two 4-bedroom and six 3-bedroom units to house migrant workers in the farming season while providing transitional housing for the homeless during the off-farming season. One unit in the property is handicap accessible. Amenities include all appliances, laundry facilities between each duplex unit, all utilities paid, underground sprinkler systems, and some furniture.

USDA Rural Development Farm Labor Housing loan funds totaling \$138,055 and grant funds of \$838,000 funded the \$976,055 farm labor housing complex.

Debbie Patrick, community development manager for USDA Rural Development stated, "USDA Rural Development is very pleased to have provided the funding for Estrella del Norte. Migrant workers are important to our rural economy and it is essential that they have a safe and affordable place to stay. Estrella del Norte will also offer transitional housing to the homeless, helping to assist those in greatest need."

Migrant workers must receive a substantial portion of their income performing farm labor employment (not self-employed) in order to live at Estrella del Norte. These workers pay 30 percent of their adjusted family income up to note rate rent. Crops requiring farm laborers in the Alliance area are sugar beets, potatoes, and beans.

USDA Rural Development is an Equal Opportunity Lender, Provider and Employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to USDA, Director, OCR, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410.



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Panhandle Community Services will make the off-season housing available for persons or families who have been temporarily displaced from their homes. These persons or families may have been in situations such as natural disasters, abusive relationships, loss of jobs because of layoffs, and loss of homes due to an inability to make house or rent payments because of circumstances beyond their control (i.e. high medical bills). Panhandle Community Services will also provide programs and assistance to these people to help them transition back into the community after working through their crisis situation. A majority of the people and families assisted will then be able to return to jobs and conventional housing.

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