

“The Wilmot Enterprise”
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Eric Tennis “Owns His Future”

USDA Rural Development Success Story Helps Highlight Homeownership



This home was made possible for Eric Tennis through the USDA's Rural Development's Housing & Community Facilities Program. Pictures are, from left, Gary Seppala, contractor, Area Director Bruce Jones; Peter Morgan – Chief of Staff for Rural Development's Housing and Community Facilities Program (Washington, DC); Eric Tennis, homeowner; Jeff Gamber – Owner of County Fair Foods (Eric's boss); Rural Development Manager Darlene Bresson; Sheni Martin – Support Coordinator for the Human Services Agency; Jim Becker – Sales Associate for Governor's Homes; and Housing Director Roger Hazuka.

USDA Rural Development joins in a national effort to bring attention to both the needs and successes in rural housing. In South Dakota, Peter Morgan, Chief of Staff for Rural Development's Housing and Community Facilities Programs

(Washington, DC) was in the state on June 20 – 21 to help celebrate Homeownership Month – “Own Your Future”

– with open houses, check presentations and ribbon cutting ceremonies highlighting housing projects and explaining homeownership opportunities through USDA.

Mr. Morgan, along with state and local officials, recently met with Eric Tennis. Eric is a single disabled person who has always dreamed of owning his own home. He is the son of Robert Tennis, former Wilmot High School Principal, of Conde, and Paula Thaden of Wilmot.

“This is the eleventh year USDA Rural Development has participated in Homeownership Month Activities. Homeownership remains a central part of the American dream and provides security, stabilizes neighborhoods, and helps create stronger communities. We are pleased to play a part in assisting Mr. Tennis with “owning his future,” said Morgan.

USDA Rural Development staff in Watertown worked through the application process with Mr. Tennis. He successfully qualified for and received a loan through the Agency's direct loan program. The direct loan program is available to low and very low income families

who, if qualified, may be eligible for low interest rates, which currently vary from 1% to 5.75%. Interest rates and terms are based on the household income and repayment ability. The Agency's direct loan program allows borrowers to purchase an existing home, finance new construction or repair an existing home.

In addition to the USDA Rural Development loan funds, Mr. Tennis received a forgivable loan from Home Ownership Assistance Program (HOAP) in the amount of \$4,000 and GAP financing through South Dakota Housing

Development Authority, which is also a forgivable loan and covers the shortfall between the cost of the home and the loan. The Human Service Agency helped Mr. Tennis move into the house, Opportunities for Independent Living (OIL) assisted with adaptive modifications to the home so he can live in the house without assistance, and Dakota Link assisted Eric

with evaluations for in-home adaptive ideas.

“I am very happy I have my own home. It's very exciting! I love it very much. If I could tell anyone with a disability about owning a home I would say go for it because it is a once in a lifetime deal,” said Eric Tennis, new homeowner.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.