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Morris Student Working With Local Energy Co-Op Agralite

Summary: The Center for Small Towns and student Zachary Threadgill ’14 are working together to help create a rewards system at local energy co-op Agralite.

(October 9, 2012)-Agralite, a large electricity co-op serving west central Minnesota, is focused on making energy more affordable for members of the community. Wanting its current benefits to reach further, the company began to look into a rewards system for its customers. Working through the Center for Small Towns, Agralite hired Zachary Threadgill ’14, Anoka, to help set up a rewards card system. Threadgill worked with various businesses to determine who would be a part of the rewards system and to what extent they were able to participate.

As a communications, media, and rhetoric major, Threadgill utilized his communications skills when approaching various business owners about what they potentially would be willing to contribute to the project. The proposed rewards card would offer Agralite’s clients discounts at various local businesses as a reward for their patronage. Threadgill needed to communicate with business owners to understand what they could and could not afford to put towards the card system, if they put anything forward at all.

Threadgill began approaching each business in mid-July, explaining the endeavor and asking for involvement. He claims that the hardest part of the process was getting the initial organizations to sign on for the program. After that, other businesses started to come more quickly.

Threadgill and Agralite are hoping to launch the project by the end of October, after alerting Agralite’s clients about the new reward card benefits. It is hoped that the new card system will not only help Agralite customers, but also boost the economy of small towns by providing incentives for customers to shop at local businesses.

The Center for Small Towns is a community outreach program housed at the University of Minnesota, Morris and serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, k-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the Center’s resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. Their mission is to focus the University’s attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota’s small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

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