

U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association officials visit Chase County

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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Wauneta Crossroads manager Angie West poses with Historic Route 6 signs. The smaller sign displayed in the window shows Wauneta Crossroads as a member of the organization. The larger sign will be posted along Highway 6 once sponsors of additional signs are identified. (Sheri Hink-Wagner | The Wauneta Breeze)

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

Representatives from the U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association were recently in Chase County. Marcia Kuiper, Executive Director for Nebraska, and David Darby, Executive Director for Iowa, were in Wauneta earlier this month as part of a tour of Nebraska via U.S. Route 6.

Along their way they took the time to take in some of the sites in Chase County and visit with

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business owners and individuals.

Angie West, manager of Wauneta Crossroads in Wauneta was one of the business owners Kuiper and Darby spent time with on their road trip.

“I enjoyed reconnecting with Angie at Wauneta Crossroads a few days ago. It helped me realize that it is important for us to connect our villages, towns and cities—large and small—all along Route 6,” said Kuiper.

Kuiper had visited with West previously, in 2012, during another trip through Chase County on Highway 6.

After their visit earlier this month, Wauneta Crossroads decided to join the association.

West explains that she has people from outside the area come through Wauneta Crossroads and want to know how to get to the Little Grand Canyon or Wauneta Roller Mills.

She said she can't help but think that people are hearing about our local landmarks from organizations like the U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association.

“I joined because it helps identify us as a place people want to see,” explains West. “We need to be able to identify where we're at in our little corner of the world.”

According to their website at www.route6tour.com, “The U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association is a not-for-profit IRS 501 (c) (3) charitable organization dedicated to the economic development and cultural preservation of inner-cities, small towns and rural communities located along all 3,652 miles of the Grand Old Highway, a.k.a. as the ‘Grand Army of the Republic Highway.’”

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The national organization is based in Port Orchard, Wash. However, the organization is in process of trying to set up state-level leadership in each of the 14 states U.S. Route 6 travels through.

Kuiper was recently appointed as Executive Director for the Nebraska initiative of the organization.

Kuiper explained the Nebraska division of the organization is currently looking for businesses and individuals to join the association and be a part of the grassroots of the organization. There are roughly 20 members in Nebraska at present.

She explained the organization is currently offering a membership special in Nebraska on 2-year memberships as well as discounts on signs to display at members' homes and businesses.

Ultimately, the Nebraska office would like to see road signs on U.S. Route 6 and Old Highway 6 to let people know the original route of the highway. The signs can be purchased by members at a discounted price of \$75 per sign, Kuiper said.

One of the goals of the organization is to encourage travelers off the interstates and onto the historic Highway 6, with the beautiful scenery and small towns that dot the highway.

During their visit, Kuiper and Darby told West they were taken in by the beautiful scenery and historical houses and businesses located on Highway 6, especially the Old Highway 6 between Wauneta and Imperial.

Kuiper hopes to schedule times to visit with community leaders in Wauneta and Imperial in early 2014. One of their hopes is to find sponsors to purchase signs to be placed along the roadway.

Those who wish to connect with the Nebraska division of the organization can do so via their

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Facebook page at facebook.com/US.Route6.Nebraska, by calling Kuiper at 402-332-5442 or by email at Nebraska@route6tour.com.

The Colorado division can be reached at Colorado@route6tour.com.

Highway 6 history

Darby provided information about the highway's long history, stating it first came into existence in 1926 as a highway between Provincetown, Mass. and Brewster, N.Y. He went on to say the highway was first signed in Nebraska on June 8, 1931. It was known as the (Theodore) Roosevelt Highway until 1953 when it was renamed to the "Grand Army of the Republic Highway" to honor Union Forces during the Civil War.

He also explained the highway became fully transcontinental in 1937, and was fully paved in 1952.

He explained that many sections of Highway 6 have been duplexed with or replaced by interstates, but that most of the highway is still available.

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Wauneta Breeze, Executive Director of the Chase County U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association, is shown in the photo above.