

Get to Know....

JAY HALL

**President of the Rural Investment Corporation &
Board Member at**



**CENTER *for*
RURAL AFFAIRS**

Jay is a retired educator who has lived and worked in the United States, Sweden, England, Australia, and China. He is passionate about social and economic equality for everyone, especially rural Americans. He helped develop, and is now President of the Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Investment Corporation. Jay has served on the Center's Advisory Board since 2010, the Rural Investment Corporation Board since 2014, and the Center's Board of Directors since 2018. He's also served on the Board for the South Central Economic Development District and is a fixture at the United Methodist Church, a member of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Heritage Highway organization, and is a former member of the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund. He's lived in Red Cloud for over a decade.

What is your favorite thing about Red Cloud?

It is a very small town but in many ways has a big town feel to it. I think that the Opera House and the Willa Cather Center have a lot to do with that. Culture and entertainment are very important.

Do you have any advice for community leaders to help get new businesses to start up in Red Cloud?

"Put yourself out there". Do your best to learn about small town economic development possibilities. For instance, two programs from the Nebraska

Department of Economic Development, the Economic Development Certified Community (EDCC) program and the Leadership Certified Community (LCC) program can provide new skills for community leaders and also build stronger bonds between The Department of Economic Development and Red Cloud. Participate actively in the work of the South Central Economic Development District and its board. Get involved in the South Platte United Chambers of Commerce. Provide more economic development information to the Board of Commissioners for Webster County. When you represent Red Cloud at meetings around the state (as you should) talk about our community.

“Get the word out”...Red Cloud is a good place to live. Red Cloud should actively promote itself through the Location One Information System (LOIS) that allows community to list available sites for businesses. It is used nation-wide by companies looking to expand or move. Community leaders need to consider putting up billboards calling attention to what Red Cloud has to offer tourists, new residents and businesses. Get business property owners to provide an available building rent-free for several months. Improve the state of our housing stock. Rehab instead of destroy.



**What are some of your favorite businesses to shop at in Red Cloud?
Why?**

I like both the Village Pharmacy and the Hometown Market. The customer service is good and the assortment of products is very good for such a small town. The owners seem to be open to suggestions about additional products. I am also very glad that both stores are run by young people.

You're a Board Member of both the Center for Rural Affairs and the South Central Economic Development District. Can you explain what these groups do and why it matters?

The Center for Rural Affairs is unapologetically rural. The Center, its staff and its Board of Directors stand up for the small family farmer and rancher, new business owner, and rural communities. For more than 40 years, the Center has been a leading force engaging people to build a better rural future. The people involved with the Center live this work.

The Center has offices in three main locations: Lyons, Nebraska, at 145 Main St., PO Box 136; Nevada, Iowa, at 1400 Fawcett Parkway, Suite D2; and Hartington, Nebraska, at 106 N. Broadway, PO Box 736; as well as in-home offices for many of the staff across the state.

The Center knows that if we want federal policy to work for rural Americans, we have to raise our voice. We have grown a rural grassroots community. We speak up about corporate wrongs against family farmers. We take rural voices to Washington.

We believe that we will succeed. It is hard work, but our passion is keeping us standing strong for rural Americans. We're over 30,000 grassroots organizers and donors and growing across the nation. We're proud of our track record of successes.

As long as rural advocates are needed for health care, clean energy, sustainable agriculture, small town business start-ups and community development, you can bet Center staff and active members will be in the front lines, building a bright rural future.

I am proud but also humbled to serve as the secretary for the Board of Directors of the Center and the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Center's subsidiary, the Rural Investment Corporation, which is a U.S. Treasury approved Community Development Financial Institution.

The South Central Economic Development District is one of the nation's Economic Development Districts (EDDs) which are multi-jurisdictional entities, commonly composed of multiple counties and in certain cases even cross-state borders. The districts help lead the locally-based, regionally driven economic development planning process that leverages the involvement of the public, private and non-profit sectors to establish a

strategic blueprint (i.e., an economic development roadmap) for regional collaboration.

South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD) is a consortium of thirteen rural Nebraska counties who see improving rural economies as a regional rather than purely local issue. For these counties, SCEDD is the resource businesses and communities rely on for advice and connections to programs designed to help businesses grow and insure community sustainability.

SCEDD is especially interested in helping projects in our region that: 1) Create sustainable communities, 2) Make existing businesses stronger, 3) Help entrepreneurs get started in business, 4) Increase housing opportunities, 5) Encourage tourism in the region

If residents of Red Cloud and Webster County want expert advice – no matter what the topic – SCEDD can point folks in the right direction. In addition to a large network of contacts at local, state, and federal agencies, The Development District can assist with a wide variety of projects and enterprises for businesses and communities. SCEDD has assisted Red Cloud in obtaining funding for hundreds of thousands of dollars in projects.

The staff and board of directors of SCEDD think the rural lifestyle we practice here in South Central Nebraska is nothing less than a national treasure, and one well worth saving. So when the staff help you to live, work, and play in a rural setting, you're helping SCEDD preserve an entire way of life. I represent the citizens of Webster County on the SCEDD board.

If you could have a superpower what would it be and why?

My first impulse is to say “fly”, but that gets too complicated unless I have other superpowers like strength, indestructibility, etc. Otherwise, a superpower that I would like to have is a super brain that produces logical and possible answers to all of life's questions.



Jay with fellow members of the Historic Preservation Commission

Do you have any hobbies or interests you'd like to share?

I like to camp out, although it is difficult to find companions who are willing to “rough it” in a tent, on an air mattress, in a sleeping back, with a camp fire to cook food, make coffee and roast marshmallows.

I like to travel. I have lived and worked in Sweden, England, Australia and China. I’ve had the chance to visit many other countries and cities. This past summer I traveled by car in Montana, Wyoming, Yellowstone Park, South Dakota’s Black Hills, Nebraska from west to east and also Missouri.

Do you have any pets?

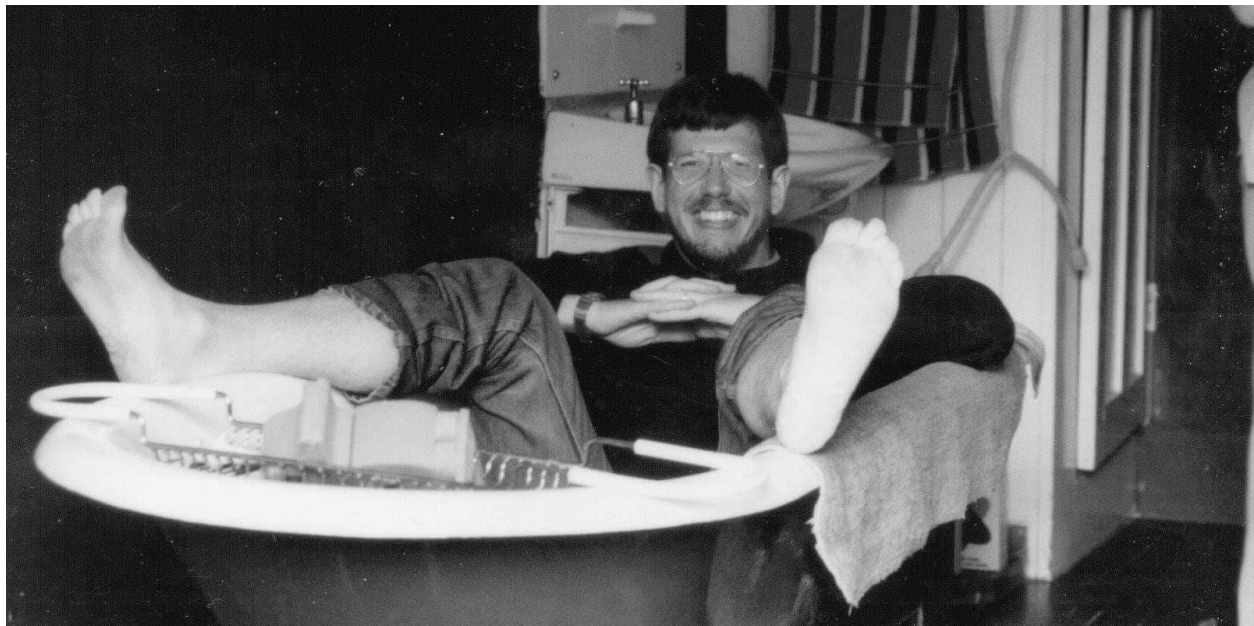
Besides a couple of spiders in the corner, I don’t have any pets. Growing up on the farm we had lots of pets and tame animals, so I miss that. I say that when I get really, really old and feeble, I will have a very intelligent and huggable dog to watch over me and vice versa.

What would your high school teachers or guidance counselor say about you if we asked?

I think that they would say that they always believed I had lots of potential. They knew that I did very well in my academic studies even though I wasn't good at sports. The teachers and counselor might remember that I was community-minded even in my teen years. They perhaps would remember that I was very interested in and friendly with the foreign exchange students and they probably would not be surprised to hear that I spent more than 25 years overseas.

What are you most proud of?

Oh, I don't spend any time thinking of what I am proud. I am happy that I can see myself as a good man, a good human being and a good citizen of my country and the world.



Jay in 1980

Do you have a mantra or mission statement you live by?

"Pay it Forward" probably is my mission statement. In my life I have benefited so much from the kindness, generosity, love, medical skills (liver transplant), parenting skills, teaching skills, etc. from hundreds or thousands of people; so that I can't pay all those people back, but maybe I can use my

time, talents and treasures to pay it forward to other people who might need my help and my concern.

What historical figure or celebrity would you most like to have dinner with? Why?

What an almost impossible choice!! Probably, for my own good, I would like to have dinner with Jesus of Nazareth. I am sure I would be full of questions about his birth, life and death. I'd like for him to explain his commandments that in antiquated English are: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* As with (doubting) Thomas I probably would ask to see the scars on his hands and feet and on his side.

Do you have any advice for someone looking to relocate to rural Nebraska?

Gather as much information as possible about several possible places to settle. Visit those places and stay for as long as you can to get the feel. Make a list of your priorities, hobbies and interests and then check out availability in those towns but also in the towns around there. Remember, traffic is rarely a problem nor is parking, so driving to other towns for entertainment is a strong possibility. If you have strongly held and cherished political, economic or social views; remember that in small towns "everybody knows everybody else's business" so that it is good to know if you decide you want to live in the country or in a town, and decide if those views that you have are stable and strong enough to survive possible criticism. Are you extroverted enough to be able to make contact with other like-minded people, though there may be only a few? Don't be shy. Introduce yourself to folks. Get involved in a church, even though you may not be particularly religious or even if your religious views are not exactly the same as the church you attend. OR get involved in a civic organization, like Lions, P.E.O., Eastern Star, the Chamber of Commerce, the school booster club. It's a good way of making contacts. You don't have to remain a member forever.



Jay with members of the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund at the Soft Opening of The Valley Child Development Center

What is your favorite song and/or recording artist?

I am a disco-baby, that is, I was a young man during the 70's and 80's and lived in the big city of Stockholm, Sweden at that time. I remember two recording artists above all others and they are Cher and Tina Turner. They are both strong women with strong easily recognizable voices. They survived tumultuous married lives with strong, domineering men. They came out of that even stronger. Their music often talks about survival as well as love. I would say that Tina's song that is my favorite is "Proud Mary", but you have to see it as well as hear it. Cher's "If I Could Turn Back Time" is one of many favorites. I guess you could say that it also is an audio-visual spectacle.

I also like gospel, bluegrass and some classic music.

Who is your favorite writer?

Mark Twain, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, is my favorite writer. I would say that he is pure-American. Yet, my favorite amongst his novels is "The Prince and the Pauper" which takes place in the royal court of Great Britain and the slums of London. Besides being a writer, Twain was a humorist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer. His sayings are fantastic. Among them are: "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog." and "Suppose you were an idiot, and suppose you were a member of Congress; but I repeat myself." and the often misquoted, 'The report of my death was an exaggeration'. The correction statement was occasioned by newspaper accounts of Twain's being ill or dead. At the time, Twain's cousin James Ross Clemens was seriously ill in London, and appears that some reports confused him with Samuel Langhorne Clemens.

What is your dream vacation?

I do believe that I have experienced my dream vacation but I would gladly do it again with a few changes. I have flown around the world on two occasions...or was it three. At each of my stops, I would visit a zoo or preferably a safari park, a botanical garden, a farm and a museum. I would fly from Nebraska to Anchorage, Alaska; to Tokyo, Japan, to Sydney, Australia, to Bangkok, Thailand, to Beijing, China; to Moscow, Russia; to Helsinki, Finland, to Stockholm, Sweden, to Amsterdam, the Netherlands and then home.

What's your favorite place to visit in Nebraska?

I am going to cheat a little and say that my favorite place in Nebraska is our capital city, Lincoln, the entire city. I especially like the Sunken Gardens, the Capitol Building, the University of Nebraska Campus (oh... both downtown AND east campus, Pioneers Park Nature Center, all the great places to eat and all of my friends from college days.



Jay at Carhenge, near Alliance, NE

Who has been the biggest influence in your life? Explain why.

I would say that my mother and father, Erma and Leonard Hall have been the biggest influences in my life. I spent time with my father during his 69 years of life and with my mother for her life of 94 years. They were farmers who grew up in poverty. They were hard working and took jobs outside the farm to give their three children a good life. My father was also an auctioneer and my mother was a cook at the school. They were relatively quiet people with very few bad habits. My father was much more extroverted when he was trying to make a sale at an auction, using that wonderful sing-song voice of an auctioneer. Mom enjoyed visiting with quilting friends while they quilted and there-by made money for senior center projects. She also loved Saturday coffee with her friends. My parents showed me the great value of politeness toward all and loyal friendship to a big family and a small group of very good friends. My father's struggle with Alzheimer's disease taught me the importance of good health care, good doctors, suspicion of insurance companies,

pharmaceutical companies, and politicians and the power of family ties and prayer. My mother said "I never thought that I'd live to be this old". She was the strong silent type. When she was a teenager, being 6 feet tall was embarrassing, so she would say that she was 5 feet, 11 inches tall. She was always making understatements. From her, I learned to "speak softly and carry a big stick". That stick was more my brain and my personality rather than a piece of wood. My parents always encouraged me and almost never discouraged me. They gave me the right amounts of discipline and love.

You've been a member of the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund for over a decade stepping off at the end of 2018. Why did you find value in belonging to RCCFF and what do you hope it can accomplish in the future?

Being an active part of the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund fit in very well with my mantra of "paying it forward". Our hometowns of birth and our adopted hometowns give us so much support and encouragement and service. Some of us can become community-minded business people or elected public officials who are willing to work hard, but most of us have ordinary lives to live and obligations to meet. Being able to do small things to give back to our community is important. The giving may be on a small scale, one-on-one, or it might be a bit bigger like volunteering for the community foundation fund. By helping citizens understand the value of pooling our resources and developing a vision for the future of our community, community foundations make dreams come true. In Red Cloud, we have looked at the methods of developing "hometown competitiveness" and have gone through a well thought out program and developed plus implemented a "visioning and planning strategy". All who were interested were welcome to participate. I have seen our RCCFF being able to positively influence decision makers, assist other civic groups, gather and disburse resources for worthwhile projects and pull together an endowed fund that will finance community development far into the future.

I hope that RCCFF will be able to assist our community's Heritage Tourism Development Director in making Red Cloud a very successful tourist destination with our own special heritage and cultural tourism. Our community is rich in those legacies from the past but everyone needs to be aware of the value of developing the history and culture of our town and putting it on display in ways that are enticing, entertaining and lucrative. We

want to make our town prosperous and we need to prosper to a large part on the tourism dollars that are spent by visitors. I am happy that Willa Cather has become a familiar name for millions of people. I want millions of people to see Willa's hometown.

Red Cloud was given the name of the great leader of the Sioux Nation. We were given a fantastic name, yet we don't capitalize on that name and fame. Native American culture is all around us. Our schools' students call themselves "warriors". But we do too little to highlight our Native American heritage. We need another Norm Peirce to once again light the camp fires of natives and raise the voices of our indigenous people.

CONTACT INFO

e-mail:

jaydehall@yahoo.com

Center for Rural Affairs:

[https://www.cfra.org/
@ruralaffairs](https://www.cfra.org/@ruralaffairs)

145 Main St.
PO Box 136
Lyons, NE 68038
402.687.2100

**South Central Economic
Development District:**

www.scedd.us

401 East Ave, 2nd Floor
P.O Box 79
Holdrege, NE 68949
308.455.4770