

New ABLE coordinator finds best of both worlds

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Hayes Center native takes over DAD position.

At 22 years old and fresh out of college, Mary Gohl already understands the need to draw young people back home.

That is actually part of what landed the December graduate of the University of Nebraska at Kearney in Dawson County.

Gohl began her duties as the business labor coordinator for Dawson Area Development's ABLE program this month.

ABLE (Advocating for Business Leadership Education) was created by DAD in 2006 to help expose students in Dawson County to the various career paths available here.

Gohl has a bachelor's degree in vocational business education.

"It's basically a business degree with a teaching endorsement," said Gohl, a 2005 graduate of Hayes Center High School.

That means Gohl has the training to teach young people about the business world as well as help businesses find the employees they need.

"ABLE is the perfect fit," she said. "I get the best of both worlds here."

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As the ABLE coordinator, Gohl's focus is to encourage young people to return to the county. She said she will also work to help create opportunities for employment.

"I come from a small community," Gohl said of Hayes Center. "It's basically the only town in the county. I understand the importance of bringing kids back to help businesses prosper. If no one ever moved home, my town would die."

Gohl said she not only wants to get kids excited about the opportunities in Dawson County but she also wants to give back to the region where she grew up driving a tractor and working cattle.

"The big challenge," she said, "is convincing kids it's OK to come home."

To do that, Gohl said she will work with the seven school districts and the local businesses to point out all of the positive aspects of Dawson County from its caring communities to its industry and agricultural opportunities.

On the other end of the spectrum, Gohl said she will be involved in helping to find employment for anyone who wants to move back here.

Currently, Gohl and other DAD employees are working with displaced Tenneco workers in Cozad, pointing them toward other career options.

"It's a difficult time but there is tremendous support for this program across the county," Gohl said. "I hope I can help young people see you can always go home."